

JIBBY JONES



By

ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

JIBBY JONES



“THIS IS MY BIG SUIT” (page 12)

JIBBY JONES

A STORY OF MISSISSIPPI RIVER
ADVENTURE FOR BOYS

BY
ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ARTHUR G. DORR



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TO
ELLIS OLMSTED BUTLER
WHO SPENT A SUMMER
ON JIBBY JONES'S ISLAND

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Drawn by Arthur G. Dorr

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CHAPTER I

OLIVER PARMENTER JONES

EVERYBODY knows that the Mississippi River is just about the biggest river in the world, and we boys who live on the shore of it are mighty proud of it — proud of the river and proud of living on the edge of it, where we can swim in it and look at it and fish in it and row boats on it. If we wanted to we could say to each other, “Come on! Let’s go down and swim awhile in the biggest river in the world, or, anyway, the almost biggest!”

We could say that, but we don’t. I guess the reason is that, when a boy wants to go swimming, he thinks about swimming and not about the bigness of the river he is going to swim in, because that is sort of geography and he gets more than enough geography in school, without thinking about it when he wants to go swimming. So we generally just hold up two fingers and whistle, and, if the other fellow says he can’t come, we say, “Oh, come on, why don’t you?” and leave the length of the old Mississippi and where it rises and where it empties and what

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States it bounds, and all that sort of nonsense, until some other time.

But, anyway, I guess we Riverbank boys have the very best of the old Mississippi River, because there must be pretty near a thousand miles of it above Riverbank and more than a thousand miles of it below Riverbank. So we must be about the middle of it. And that ought to be the best, any way you look at it.

Now, it isn't very often that we boys can find a boy we can brag about the Mississippi River to. The reason is that not many new boys come to Riverbank and all of us Riverbank boys have an equal share in the river — as you might say — and it doesn't do me any good to brag about the river to Tad Willing or Skippy Root or Wampus Smale, because they know as much about the river as I do, and they would laugh at me. So, in one way, it was fine to have a new boy — one that had never seen our part of the river — come to town. That was Jibby Jones.

I am not exactly right when I say Jibby Jones came to town, because he did not exactly come to Riverbank. He did not stay in Riverbank. He got off the train at Riverbank, with his father and mother and his twin sisters and his little brother — and two or three trunks — but the whole caboodle went right down to the Launch Club float and got aboard Parcell's motor-boat and went up to Birch Island. Birch Island is four miles up the river. There are about twenty cottages on it and some of

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the Riverbank folks spend the summer there. Our folks do — mine and Tad's and Skippy's and Wampus's folks.

The cottages on Birch Island stand along the edge of the island and they are all set up on stilts. In the spring the old Mississippi is apt to get on a rampage and flood over the whole island, and that is why the cottages are on stilts. If the cottages were on the ground, the river would come in at the cottage windows when it was high, or wash them away and destroy them.

This year all our folks — Tad's and Skippy's and mine and Wampus's folks — went up to the island early in July. Our folks own cottages there and we all love it; we get up there as soon as we can; we have been up there every summer for I don't know how long.

Well, we hadn't any more than got settled — got the boats out from under the cottages and the mosquito screens patched and the tall grass and weeds cut — than the Joneses came, and this funny-looking Jibby Jones with them. They took the two-story cottage that is called Columbia Cottage. It stands on eight-foot stilts and it is a pretty good cottage — as good as any on the island.

Tad and Skippy and Wampus and I were down by the river in front of Wampus's cottage trying to see what was the matter with the motor of Wampus's motor-boat when this Jibby Jones came walking up along the path and stopped to look at us.

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“Good-morning,” he said, in a sort of lazy drawl, and we looked up and decided we did not like him. We thought we hadn’t much use for another fellow, anyway, because we four were enough. We four always hung together and had good enough times by ourselves. So we looked up and thought, “Well, we don’t want you around!” but he had said “Good-morning!” so we had to say something. So we said “Hello!” but not as if we meant it. We thought we didn’t want to have anything to do with a fellow that said “Good-morning!” when he might just as well have said “Hello!” in the first place.

We went right on fixing the motor-boat. We thought we would let him stand there until he was tired of it, and then perhaps he would go away. By and by he said:

“Are you mending the motor-boat? Doesn’t it go?”

We wondered what he thought we were fussing with it for. It seemed about as foolish a question as any question he could have asked us. So I said:

“Sometimes it goes; what do you think a motor-boat is for?”

Jibby Jones did not answer right away. He seemed to be thinking that over. It seemed to take him quite a while to make up his mind what the answer was, and we had a good chance to look at him.

He was queer-looking. That is about the only way I can say it — he was queer-looking. He was about as old as we were, but at first you thought he

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was quite a lot older. That was because he was so tall; he was almost six feet tall; he was taller than my father or Tad's father and almost twice as tall as Wampus's father, who is short and fat. He was just about as tall as Skippy's father. I never saw such a tall boy for his age.

Another thing that made him look oldish was his spectacles. He wore spectacles with big, round glasses in them and tortoise-shell rims and handles — if the things you put behind your ears are called handles. But the thing that made him look the queerest was his nose. It was the biggest nose I ever saw in my life, or that Tad or Skippy or Wampus ever saw. They said so. It was bigger than any nose I ever saw on a man, and the funniest thing about it was that when you looked right straight at Jibby Jones from in front it did not look like a big nose at all; it only looked like a big nose from the side. This was because his nose was not thick or wide, but only long and much. It was straight enough, but it started too far up on his forehead and went so far out into the air in front of him that it was a long way back to his face again. The thing it made me think of was a rudder, or the centerboard of a boat, only, if it had been a rudder, it should not have been on the front of his head, but on the back of it.

So this Jibby Jones stood thinking, because I had said: "What do you think a motor-boat is for?"

After a while he nodded his head as if he had thought enough and said:

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“That’s a good question. I never thought of that question before, but, when you think about it like that, motor-boats are used for different things, aren’t they?”

“Yes; for climbing church steeples,” Skippy said, joking him.

Jibby Jones looked at us thoughtfully.

“I think you’re teasing me,” he said. “A great many people tease me. It is because I look stupid. But I am not as stupid as I look.”

Wampus nudged me.

“Who told you that?” he asked Jibby Jones.

“My father told me,” Jibby Jones said, and he did not even crack a smile. He was in dead earnest. “My father has said to me, several times, ‘Son, you are not as stupid as you look.’”

“Well, he ought to know,” Tad said.

“Yes, that’s what I think,” Jibby Jones said. “I always think my father ought to know, because he is an author and writes books. An author who writes books has to know a great many things.”

Well, Tad put down the wrench he was using then and looked at Jibby Jones again, and I guess we all looked at him. We had heard that some author man was coming to Birch Island, and we knew this must be the author man’s boy. So we took a good look at him. I don’t know what we would have said next, or whether we would have said anything, but Jibby Jones spoke:

“What I was thinking, when I said motor-boats

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were used for various things, was that I saw one used on the Amazon as a coffin. A man father knew was bitten by a snake and died and the natives used his motor-boat as a coffin to bury him in. That was what I meant. I have never seen a motor-boat used to climb church steeples. I mean actually to climb them. The nearest I have come to seeing that was in Nebraska when they used a motor-boat to ring the fire-alarm bell."

Tad was just going to pick up his wrench again, but he did not do it. He let it lie. He looked right straight at Jibby Jones.

"To ring a fire-alarm bell!" he exclaimed.

"It was at Europa, Nebraska," said Jibby Jones, as if he was saying the commonest thing ever, "when the Missouri River went over the levee and swamped the lower part of the town. They used the bell in the steeple of the Methodist Church as a fire alarm and a house in the upper part of the town caught fire — up on the hill, you know — and they had to give the alarm, because it was at night. And the church was entirely under water, except the bell and the steeple. So my father and another man took a motor-boat and went to the church steeple and rang the alarm bell. But I never really saw a motor-boat used to climb a steeple."

We couldn't say anything. We were stumped. He was too much for us. But he went right on:

"I don't mean to say it could not be done," he said. "I suppose a motor-boat could be fixed with

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cog wheels or claws so it could be used to climb steeples. I expect that is what you meant."

"Oh, yes!" Skippy said. "That's what we meant, of course!"

He said it as sarcastical as he could, but this Jibby Jones did not turn a hair.

"I suppose so," he said. "I make it a rule never to doubt anything any one says, because such strange things can be done. I remember when I was on the St. Lawrence River —"

"Don't you mean the Nile?" interrupted Skippy. "Don't you mean they used motor-boats to hunt hippopotamuses on the Nile?"

"I suppose they do," said Jibby Jones, "but I did not see them doing it when I was on the Nile. I was only going to say I saw them use a motor-boat to save one ninth of a cat on the St. Lawrence."

"One ninth of a cat!" cried Wampus, and began to laugh. "How would you save one ninth of a cat?"

"It was starving to death," said Jibby Jones, quite seriously. "We were at Clayton and some one brought news to father that a cat was on one of the Thousand Islands. They said it was so wild no one could get near it, but father loves cats and cats love father, so he said he would go in a motor-boat and save the cat from starving. So he did. He got the cat and brought it back to Clayton."

"But that was the whole cat," said Wampus.

"No," said Jibby Jones quite seriously, "it was only one ninth of a cat. You know a cat has nine

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lives. And father said there was no doubt that cat had already lost eight of its lives by starvation, so, of course, what he saved was only one life, and that was only one ninth of the cat. I am sure that is right because we kept the cat for years and we always called it Ninth. That was the name father gave it, because it was only one ninth of a regular cat. We kept it until it was drowned in the Rio Grande."

He pronounced it Ree-o Grandy, but we knew what he meant. It is the river that is between Texas and Mexico. Tad drew a deep breath.

"You must think you have been on nearly every river in the world, don't you?" he asked.

"I have, nearly," said this Jibby Jones. He did not say it in a bragging way, either. He said it as if it was so.

"Have you ever been on the Mississippi before?" Tad asked him.

"Not this part," Jibby Jones said. "I've been on the upper Mississippi, and on the lower Mississippi, but father saved this middle part of the Mississippi until last."

Tad picked up his wrench and tapped on the side of the motor-boat sort of carelessly.

"Well," Tad said, winking at us, "I've not seen many rivers. I've seen the Cedar River and the Iowa River and the Rock River, and that is about all, but I'll tell you one thing. I'll tell you this: this middle part of the Mississippi is the greatest old river in the world. That lower Mississippi is too big,

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and that upper Mississippi is too little, but this middle Mississippi is just right. And it don't make any difference what you think you know about other rivers, it don't do you any good when you come to our old Mississippi. This is a real river. It's different."

"So father said," said Jibby Jones.

"Yes," said Tad, "and this is no river for a raw boy to monkey with until he learns about it. What is your name?"

Then Tad winked at us again, but Jibby Jones did not see him wink and he answered as sober as a judge.

"My name," he said, "is Oliver Parmenter Jones, but nobody calls me that. Nearly every one calls me Jibby. They call me that because of my nose; it is like the jib on a sailboat, you see. Don't you think it is?"

He turned sideways so we could see that his nose was like the jib of a sailboat! I never saw such a fellow! He did not merely pretend to be proud that his nose was like the jib of a sailboat; he really was proud of it. Later we learned he was proud of his nose because it was like his Grandfather Parmenter's nose. Jibby was the only one in his family that had the Parmenter nose. I thought it was a queer thing to be proud of.

"So you can call me Jibby, if you want to," Jibby Jones told us, just as if he did not doubt we would want to call him something. "I rather like Jibby,"

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he said; "it sounds nautical. But you can call me Main Mast if you'd rather. Quite a few call me Main Mast. That's because I'm so tall. Father and mother call me son, but you wouldn't like to do that. And the twins and brother call me Wally. I don't like that so much. It suggests a walrus. Do you mind if I help you with the motor-boat? I know quite a little about motor-boats."

Well, he did! He came down the bank and in two minutes he had the motor-boat chugging away like an old-timer!

"Father says I have a nose for motor troubles," he told us.

After that we let him be one of us. We couldn't be really mean to a fellow like that; he was too good-natured and willing, and too much fun, too. He was the queerest boy we ever knew. One day he came out in an old suit that was so small for him that the pants came halfway to his knees and his sleeves came only about halfway to his wrists. He did look funny! But we did not say anything; a fellow don't care much about clothes. Jibby Jones said it. He said:

"I don't like this suit any more. I like my small suit better."

We could not believe we heard him correctly.

"Your small suit!" I said. "You mean the big one you have been wearing. I should think you would call that your big suit and this one your small suit. That one is twice as big as this one."

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“No,” he said, “this is my big suit. I got this suit two years ago and we all call this my big suit because when I got it it was too big for me. And the other was a little small for me when I got it this spring; so it is my small suit.”

That was how he figured it out, and nobody could make him believe the small suit should be called the small one. It had been the “big suit” once, and that was the name of it, so it was always the “big suit.” We thought he was stupid. But he wasn’t. Not when you came to find out. He looked at things a different way from the rest of us, that was all.

CHAPTER II

THE PEARL-DIGGERS

WELL, it took us quite a while to learn that Jibby Jones was not as stupid as he looks, and that when he looks stupidest and says the queerest things is when he is farthest from being stupid. That is when that old brain of his is working hardest. It took us a couple of weeks to learn that, and to get to liking Jibby the way we did, and I don't know that Wampus ever did think, in the bottom of his heart, that Jibby was anything but stupid and lucky.

And at first we did try to "string" old Jibby good and plenty. We told him things about our river that would not have fooled a mud-cat or a carp. And when we told those things to Jibby, he would look at us through his spectacles in that serious way of his, and sometimes we were sure he believed the nonsense, and sometimes we were not so sure.

One thing we told him was about getting mussel shells out of the river. That is quite a big business around Riverbank because there are so many pearl-button factories in Riverbank and they have to have shells to cut the buttons out of. The shells they use are mussel shells — a sort of clam shell — and hundreds of men dredge for the shells. Some of the men rake up the shells with long two-handled rakes and others drag for them with dull hooks strung on a

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long cross-bar. The mussels sort of bite the hooks and hang on and the dredgers pull them up.

Jibby Jones knew all this; we couldn't fool him about it because his father had told him; but we did try to fool him about another part of it. That was about getting mussel shells that had real pearls in them — the pearls the women wear for jewelry. Tad was the one that tried to fool him about that. I guess Jibby asked Tad how they got the pearls, because Tad's father was a pearl-buyer.

"Well, that's a pretty hard job, Jibby," Tad told him. "Not many people want to try diving for pearls in the old Mississippi, I can tell you! No, sir!"

"Why?" Jibby asked. "I never heard of sharks in the Mississippi, or alligators this far north."

"Well, I should say not!" said Tad. "If there were sharks and alligators here, too, nobody would ever dive for pearls. No, sir! It isn't sharks or alligators, it's mud!"

"Mud?" Jibby asked.

"Yes, sir! Mud!" Tad told him. "Common old Mississippi River mud. That's why so few hunt pearls; that's why pearls are so high-priced. The mud is awful. The mussels with real pearls in them don't lie right on top of the mud like common button-shell mussels; they burrow down in the mud. The minute a mussel feels a pearl beginning to grow in it, it begins to burrow."

Of course, Skippy and Wampus and I could

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hardly keep from shouting out loud when Tad said all this nonsense, because there wasn't a true word in it, but Jibby Jones just stared at Tad through his spectacles and believed it all. Or we thought he did.

"I should think they could dredge a little deeper and get them," Jibby said.

"Dredge deeper?" said Tad, because he did not know just what to say to that.

"Pshaw!" Skippy put in. "Dredge deeper! That *would* be a nice thing to do, wouldn't it? And the minute the mussel felt the dredge, it would spit out the pearl and that pearl would be lost forever. You can't dredge for pearl mussels, Jibby."

"Of course not!" said Tad. "You have to dive for them. You — you —"

Tad had to think quick to think up some ridiculous thing to tell Jibby, but Tad was a good one at that and he did it! Yes, sir!

"You have to do the only way it can be done, if you want to get pearls," he said. "You have to nose them out."

He stopped short and looked at Jibby's nose.

"Why, you'd make the finest kind of pearl-diver yourself, Jibby," he said. "You've got a splendid nose for it. You've got the best nose I ever saw for pearl-diving in the Mississippi."

"Do you think so?" Jibby asked, as pleased as pie.

"I know so," Tad told him. "You'll know so, too, when I tell you how the divers have to get the pearl-bearing shells. There's only one way. The pearl-

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bearing mussel is the scariest thing in the world; a rabbit is brave alongside of a mussel that has a pearl in it. The slightest hard thing frightens a pearl mussel half to death and starts it digging deeper into the mud, and then you never can get it."

"They're timid?" asked Jibby Jones as if he understood.

"Timid and tender," said Tad. "When a mussel is bearing a pearl its shell is ten times as tender as a deer's horns when they are in velvet. The least touch of anything hard hurts the mussel and makes it drop its pearl. That's why the pearl-divers root them out with their noses."

"Is that the way they do?" asked Jibby.

"Of course! You can't use a hook, because it is too hard; and you can't use a rake because it is too hard; and you can't even use your hands, because of your finger nails. The only way you can root out a pearl mussel is with your nose. The end of a nose is soft and does not hurt the mussel. They like the feel of it."

Jibby Jones felt the end of his nose.

"It *is* soft, isn't it?" he said, as if he had never discovered that before.

"Of course, it is soft!" said Tad. "And that is why the pearl-divers of the Mississippi use their noses. The only trouble is that they can't keep at the job long; they wear their noses down so that they are not fit to dig with. Then they are of no more use in rooting for pearl mussels. A man with a bunt nose,

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or with a pug like Wampus Smale's nose, is no good at all."

"I expect my Grandfather Parmenter —" Jibby began, but we all knew what he was going to say. He was going to say his Grandfather Parmenter would have made a good Mississippi pearl-diver. Jibby did not finish saying it. He thought of something else.

We were in the motor-boat, back in Third Slough, fishing for bullhead catfish. They were not biting very well, which was why we had so much time to talk; bullheads do not mind talk; they're stupid.

Well, we knew there was not much use fishing just then. The river was too high and too low; too much both and too much neither. But we had come because Jibby had wanted to come. It was the last chance he would have to fish with us. The reason was that his father had decided they must leave Birch Island sooner than they had expected and go back to New York. And the reason of that was that Mr. Jones had been asked by a publisher to write a book about spending a summer on an island in the Mississippi and the publisher had suddenly decided he did not want that book. So Mr. Jones thought he could not afford to spend any more time on the island. The publisher had expected to send Mr. Jones a thousand dollars, but now he would not, and this was the last day we were apt to spend with Jibby, fishing together and things like that.

"How do they do," Jibby asked Tad, "when they dive for mussels and root them out?"

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"Why, it is as simple as pie if you have the right kind of nose," Tad said. "You dive from a boat in a slough or some other muddy place — some place with a muddy bottom — and when you reach the mud you take hold of the mud with both hands. That is to hold you down. Then you begin rooting in the mud with your nose. You root here and you root there, as fast as you can, and if you don't find a mussel you come up for breath."

"Of course. One would do that," said Jibby, as serious as an owl. "But if one roots out a mussel?"

"Oh! Then you have to open your mouth and grab it quick," said Tad, nudging me. "Like mumblety-peg. When you root up a shell with your nose, you open your mouth and grab the shell and then come up as quick as you can; but you have to be sure you don't open your mouth until you get in the boat. If you do, the mussel will open its shell and spit out the pearl."

Jibby Jones looked over the side of the boat.

"Do you think this would be a good place to dive for pearls?" he asked, sort of wistfully.

"This? This is one of the finest places in the Mississippi," Tad said. "I'm surprised there is no one diving right now."

I had to turn my head away and grin. The water was not five feet deep where we were.

"I am going to dive for a pearl," Jibby Jones said suddenly.

"That's a good idea," Tad said. "The bullheads

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are not biting, anyway. That's always a good sign; bullheads hardly ever bite where there are mussels. And there couldn't be a better day to get a pearl. The sun is just right. It is low enough to slant on the water and not dazzle the mussels. When they are dazzled, they go deeper in the mud. They ought to be near the top of it now."

"I can stay under water quite long," Jibby said as he began to take off his clothes. "I stayed under water so long once, in the River Niger, that father was afraid I was drowned. So don't worry if I stay down long."

"We won't," Tad said.

It took Jibby quite a while to get ready; he was always slow. Then he stood on the gunwale of the motor-boat and put his palms together and dove. He did not have far to dive; he must have run his head into the soft black mud up to his ears, for he was up in a second, shaking his head and holding onto the boat.

"It isn't as deep as I thought it was," he said as he wiped the mud from his face. "I did not do that dive very well. I'll have to try it again."

"We would go in with you," Skippy said, "only our noses are so blunt it is no use."

Jibby climbed into the boat and made ready again. This time he took a slanting dive. We could see him under water; he looked yellow under all that yellow water. We could see his arms spread out as he dug his fingers into the mud to hold on, and we

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could see his head move as he ploughed into the mud with his nose. We laughed like fury. It was the funniest thing I ever saw.

He did stay under water quite a while. He had not fibbed when he said he could stay under a long time.

Wampus got frightened. "We'd better get him out," he said. "He'll drown, with his nose and mouth full of mud that way."

Tad was watching pretty close. "No, he's all right," he said, as well as he could for laughing. "As long as his head keeps bobbing that way, he is all right; watch him nose-digging for the great pearl mussels of the Mississippi! I hope a mussel don't bite his nose off!"

Just then Jibby started to come up. He wiggled and squirmed himself onto his knees and staggered to his feet. After he began to wiggle, we could see nothing but muddy water, and when he stood up his face and head were one mass of soft mud. It dripped from him and ran from him, but he just put his face over the side of the boat and opened his mouth and let a mussel shell fall inside.

"Catch it!" he gasped; "catch it!" — as if it was a rabbit or something that could jump and run, and then he ducked down and sloshed water over his head until he was as clean as any one could ever get in that old slough water. He came up smiling.

"Well, I got one!" he drawled triumphantly. "I hope it is a big pearl. I hope it is big enough to

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sell for enough money to let father stay here the rest of the summer. That's what I want it for. Because I like you fellows. You are all so helpful and friendly."

I'll say I felt ashamed then. So did Tad and so did Skippy. I guess Wampus did, too. We all did. We did not know what to say.

But Jibby, naked as could be, was in the boat now and he picked up the shell.

"I hope it did not have time to get rid of the pearl," he said. "I hope I did not frighten it too much; I hit it rather hard with my nose. Let me have your knife, Wampus."

Wampus had a big knife, a regular frog-stabber.

"Jibby — listen!" Tad said, but Jibby was opening the mussel. He seemed to know how. I suppose he had opened oysters in the Seine or somewhere; he never told us. He slid the knife between the two valves of the shell of the mussel, and cut the muscle part, and the shell fell open.

"It looks like quite a good one," was the next thing we heard Jibby Jones say, just as matter-of-fact as if he was talking about a dictionary or an apple.

We all stood up, then, and looked.

"Merry Christmas! Mer-ry Christmas! And a Hap-py New Year!" Tad exclaimed. "Well, what do you know about that!"

Right there in the shell was the biggest, pinkest, glisteningest, roundest pearl I ever saw in my life!

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No, I'll say it was twice as big as any pearl I ever saw!

"A thousand dollars!" Tad cried. "That's worth a thousand dollars if it is worth a cent! I know! My father buys them."

We were all crazy with excitement except Jibby Jones. He took it quite calmly.

"I'm glad it is a thousand-dollar one," he said. "Now father can stay on Birch Island the rest of the summer."

And that was about all he ever said about the pearl, even when Tad's father paid twelve hundred dollars for it. Wampus did ask Jibby if he didn't expect to go back and dive for a lot more pearls. We thought he would say he meant to.

"I think not," Jibby Jones said. "You see, Tad says the pearl-divers are apt to wear their noses down to a snub, bumping them into the shells, and I wouldn't like to do that. My nose is the only nose in our family that is like Grandfather Parmenter's and I wouldn't like to wear it down to a pug."

CHAPTER III

THE CLIMBING RABBIT

MAYBE feeling sorry that Jibby had to go away was what made us feel so glad he had found that pearl and did not have to go. Teasing him had come to be part of the fun we counted on having, and, when we saw old Jib come out of his cottage, one or the other of us would nearly always say: "There's Jibby — let's go tell him something about the river." And between-times we thought up things to tell him. But all the time we were getting to like him more and more.

A couple of days after Mr. Willing had bought the pearl, Skippy and Wampus and Tad and I were under my folks' cottage, because it was raining. There was always plenty to do on the island, enough kinds of fun each summer to keep us busy ten years, and on rainy days we could always sit under one of the cottages and whittle or talk or make mud statues. The rain was coming down in regular slats, as if it meant to rain all day and all night, and we were talking about one thing and another when Jibby Jones came dodging through the rain and looked in at us.

"Hello, Main Mast," Skippy called out to him; "lower yourself and blow in out of the rain."

Sometimes we called him "Main Mast" and

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sometimes we called him "Jibby"; he never cared what we called him. So he came in out of the wet and sat on a box. For a minute or two he watched us making mud animals, or whittling, or whatever we were doing. Then he said:

"Do you know whether anybody named M'rell ever lived in Riverbank, or down below Riverbank, or up here above Riverbank? A man named M'rell?"

"No," I said, and Tad and Wampus and Skippy said the same. None of us had ever heard of anybody named M'rell.

"Nobody named that ever lived around here that I ever heard of," Tad said. "Why?"

"I thought maybe you did know of somebody named M'rell that had lived somewhere around here," Jibby said.

"Orpheus Cadwallader might know," I said, for Orpheus was the caretaker of the island and knew nearly everybody up and down the river. And then we talked about something else, and that was a pity, for if we had asked Jibby another question about M'rell just then, we might have saved a lot of time in starting our hunt for the land pirate's treasure. If we had asked him how he spelled M'rell, we might have saved weeks and weeks. So, after half an hour or so, Jibby spoke of M'rell again.

"When I was down on the St. Francis River — " he began, and we all yelled, because the rivers Jibby had been on were getting to be a joke. You couldn't mention a thing but it reminded Jibby of some

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river he had been on — the Nile or the Hudson or the Amazon or some other river. It was all true enough, too, because his father wrote books about rivers and had been on most of the rivers in the world, and had taken Jibby there; but it was a sort of joke the way old Jibby was always dragging in a river, no matter what we were talking about. So he waited until we stopped hooting, and then he went on.

“It occurred to me,” he said, “that it was selfish of me to keep what I know about M’re^l to myself, because you boys are so good to me. When I was down on the St. Francis River with father, there was an old negro named Mose, who said he was over one hundred years old. He used to paddle us around in a skiff when we went fishing for bass and he told us about M’re^l.”

“Who was M’re^l?” Wampus asked. “What has M’re^l got to do with us?”

Now, I want you to notice, right here, that Jibby said “M’re^l” and that we all said “M’re^l” because he did. And the reason Jibby pronounced the name that way was because that old negro Mose had called it that. The name was really Murrell, when we came to find out. If we had seen that name written or spelled out, we would not have called it “M’re^l”; we would have called it “*Murrell*,” more as if it was “Murl.” But Jibby called it “*Mur-rell*,” more as if it was “M’re^l.” And “Murl” and “M’re^l” don’t sound at all alike. His way was as if it rhymed with “tell,” like:

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"Listen, my children, and I will tell
A wonderful story about M'rell."

The way we pronounced that name was as if it rhymed with "squirrel," like this:

"Once there was a pretty squirrel
That was owned by John A. Murrell."

Anyway, Wampus asked, "What has M'rell got to do with us?" and Jibby went ahead and told us, sitting there under our cottage out of the rain.

"It's about a land pirate's treasure," he said. "Father says it is probably nonsense, and that there are a million chances to one that there is no treasure, and that if there ever was any I could never find it."

"What is a land pirate?" Skippy asked. "I never heard of one."

"Neither had I until I was down on the St. Francis River," said Jibby. "That river is in Missouri and Arkansas, and it empties into the Mississippi just above Helena, Arkansas. Father was in Helena, Arkansas, studying that part of the Mississippi River, and that is one of the parts of the South where the land pirate did his pirate work — around Helena and thereabouts."

He stopped to chuckle.

"What are you laughing about?" I asked him.

"Why, about the Helenas," Jibby said. "When father and I were on the Yellowstone River, at Billings, Montana, we happened to mention Helena, Montana, and the folks said, 'Up here in Montana

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we don't call it Hel-e-na; we call it Hel'na. The town in Arkansas is Hel-e-na, but ours is Hel'na,' and when we got to Helena, Arkansas, and called it Hel-e-na, they said, 'Down here in Arkansas we don't call it Hel-e-na; we call it Hel'na. The town in Montana is Hel-e-na; but ours is Hel'na.'

"At any rate," Jibby went on, "the Mississippi at Helena is mostly muddy and not good for bass fishing, but the St. Francis is clearer, so we went up to the St. Francis to see what it was like and to catch some bass. And the old negro named Mose told us about this John A. Murrell, who was the greatest land pirate that ever lived, and had ten times as many men as any sea pirate that ever sailed the seas. He pirated all the way from Tennessee to Mississippi and Arkansas — "

"But what has that to do with Iowa and us?" Wampus asked. "That's about a thousand miles from here."

"That is what I am coming to," Jibby said. "It was away back in 1835, and around then, that John A. Murrell was a land pirate. And you want to remember that John A. Murrell was not a one-horse horsethief; he was a big land pirate. He had about one thousand men helping him. They stole slaves and horses and carried them away and sold them, and robbed and stole and broke every law there was. There were two sorts of Murrell's men. Two hundred and fifty of them were the Grand Council, and did the planning, and furnished the brains, and seven

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hundred and fifty others did the mean work — stole and robbed. But that was not all. There were hundreds and hundreds of people who seemed respectable who helped John A. Murrell. Some were in the gang and got part of the loot, and some were just afraid of him and helped him because they thought he would murder them and steal their slaves and cattle, and burn their houses and barns if they did not help him."

"That don't mean there is any treasure anywhere where we could get it," said Wampus, who was always objecting to things.

"That's what I'm coming to," Jibby Jones said. "All through that country there were people who were afraid of John A. Murrell and his gangs, and they sheltered the pirates and fed them and hid them when the pirates were in danger. They were willing to hide the negroes and the horses the gang stole. And the sign that a man was a friend was one lone pine tree planted in the corner of a yard or of a farm or plantation. That was the sign of a friend's place. Whenever any of the Murrell gang saw a lone pine in a corner, they knew it was safe to go there and ask shelter or food or a hiding-place. The land piracy was so huge and successful that John A. Murrell grew so bold he planned a gigantic uprising of negroes and Murrellers all over the South, to make a new nation and grab everything, but the news of it leaked out and he was caught and jailed. And not a cent of his money was ever found."

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“But how does that prove — ”

“Wait!” Jibby drawled. “The old negro Mose, when he was paddling us up and down the St. Francis River, said he wished he was young and spry again, because if he was he would go up the Mississippi to Iowa, and hunt for the land pirate’s treasure. He said his father had been John A. Murrell’s slave and bodyguard and private servant. He said he had a map hidden away in a safe place — a map John A. Murrell’s own brother drew with his own hand and sent to John A. Murrell by a safe messenger, when John A. Murrell was in prison. But the messenger could not reach John A. Murrell. so he gave the map to Mose’s father.”

“What was the map?” I asked.

“Well, Mose said it was a map to show where the land pirate’s treasure was hidden,” Jibby said. “He said John A. Murrell’s brother came up North here, where he would not be known, and hid the treasure. And this is what old Mose said: ‘Riverbank — that’s where all that money is hid away at. That’s what the map say — Riverbank.’ And this is Riverbank, isn’t it? You’d call this ‘up North,’ wouldn’t you?”

I was excited right away, but Skippy whittled a few shavings off the stick he was whittling.

“Yes,” he said then, “but you didn’t see the map, did you?”

“No,” Jibby said.

“Well, I think it is mighty slim,” Skippy said.

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"Most likely it is just some negro talk. If the map does say 'Riverbank,' it may mean 'river bank' — the bank of any river anywhere. And anybody would be foolish to send all his treasure a thousand miles away, to be hidden. A man wouldn't do that; it don't sound reasonable. You might as well look for fish in the tops of trees as look for that pirate treasure anywhere around here."

"Or rabbits," I said, and Skippy and Tad laughed, but Wampus did not laugh.

"Rabbits do climb trees!" Wampus said, ready to get mad in a minute.

Jibby looked at Wampus in that solemn, slow way of his.

"I don't believe rabbits climb trees, Wampus," Jibby said.

We had been talking about rabbits before Jibby came in out of the rain, but I don't remember what started us. I guess maybe I started it by saying it looked as if it might rain all day, and then Wampus said he remembered a worse rain — the one when we had the school picnic. Then Skippy said he had to laugh when he thought of how Sue Smale's black straw hat sort of melted in the rain that day, and the black ran down her face and on her yellow hair, because she had blacked the hat with shoe polish. Then Tad had said girls did things like that: they were silly. And I said, "Yes, you bet they're silly; why, Sue says rabbits climb trees." Then Wampus got mad and said, "Rabbits do climb trees; I know

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they do, because my Uncle Oscar saw one in a tree."

So now Wampus told Jibby his Uncle Oscar had seen a rabbit up a tree.

"I guess it was a squirrel," said Jibby. "Squirrels climb trees; rabbits don't."

"I guess my Uncle Oscar knows," said Wampus, ready to get mad in a minute at anybody that said his Uncle Oscar did not know. "He told me, and he told Sue, and that's why she said so. He was over in the Illinois bottom land last spring, when the river was high, rowing around in a skiff, and he saw a rabbit in a tree. It had climbed there. Uncle Oscar said so."

"I don't want to dispute any conclusion your Uncle Oscar drew from the fact that a rabbit was in a tree, Wampus," said Jibby Jones, "but couldn't it have been a squirrel? Squirrels climb trees."

Tad shouted. It was too funny to see Jibby sitting there like a wise old owl telling us that squirrels climb trees. He might as well have said water was wet, we knew it so well.

"Aw!" said Wampus; "I guess my uncle knows a rabbit from a squirrel. It was a rabbit. It was a regular cottontail."

Jibby blinked his eyes and thought this over.

"Perhaps it didn't climb the tree," he said. "Perhaps the water had been higher and the rabbit had been floating on a board and hopped off the board into the tree, and then the water went down and left

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the rabbit in the tree. Then, if your uncle saw a rabbit high up in the tree, he might have thought it had climbed there."

"No," said Wampus, "because the water was as high then as it had been; it was higher than it had been."

"Did your uncle see the rabbit climb the tree?" Jibby Jones asked.

"No, it was there when he saw it," said Wampus. "It was high up in the tree; twice as high as he could reach from his boat. He said it was the first tree-climbing rabbit he had seen, but that he understood just what had happened. The river had come up and surrounded the rabbit and the tree, and as the river got higher there was no place for the rabbit to go but up the tree. It just had to climb, so it climbed. So rabbits do climb trees. Because my uncle doesn't tell lies, and I can lick any two that say he does."

That seemed reasonable to me. I thought Wampus had proved it pretty well, and so did Tad and Skippy. When an uncle sees a rabbit up a tree and that uncle don't lie and his nephew can lick any two that say he does lie, it seems a pretty sure thing that rabbits do climb trees. We admitted it. Tad and Skippy and I admitted it, but Jibby Jones was not that sort of admitter.

"It may be so," he said, "because a lot of things that do not seem so are so. I never thought crabs could climb trees until father took me to Tahiti. I

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saw crabs climb trees and throw down coconuts there."

"Oh, come off!" Wampus laughed. We all laughed.

"But I did," said Jibby. "They climb trees and pick the coconuts, and throw them down, to break them open. And if the coconuts don't break open, they carry them up the trees again and drop them again, until they do break."

We thought he was trying to fool us, but he was as sober as a judge. Of course, we didn't believe him; not until I asked my father and he said it was true. Then I had to.

"There is also," said Jibby, "a fish that climbs trees. I have never seen one, but my father has. I think it was in Liberia. Perhaps not. And some fish fly."

"Of course! We've all heard of flying fish," said Wampus. "What do you think we are? Ignorant?"

"But here," said Jibby Jones, "fish do not fly, and fish do not climb trees, and crabs do not climb trees. And I am not so sure rabbits climb trees."

"You don't mean to say my Uncle Oscar says what is not so, do you?" Wampus demanded, as mad as he could get.

"No, Jibby," I said, "you must not say that, because Wampus's Uncle Oscar isn't that kind. He doesn't tell lies."

"I wasn't saying he did," said Jibby. "I don't know him, but I believe he tells all the truth there is."

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I only say he saw the rabbit in the tree, but he did not see it climb the tree. The rabbit might have got into the tree some other way."

"How, I'd like to know?" Wampus demanded.

"I don't know," said Jibby. "I wasn't there. I only mean to say things sometimes seem to be so when they are not so. If there was such a tree as one that grows up in a night, and if that was a tree of that kind, the rabbit might have stepped on it without thinking it was that sort of tree. Then the tree might have shot up in a hurry, with the rabbit in its top. Then anybody, seeing the rabbit in the top of the tree, would naturally think it had climbed the tree."

"There are no such trees," said Wampus. "Trees don't grow in a night."

"And if there were such trees," Skippy said, "it would not prove anything. If the rabbit stepped on a limb one inch from the ground that limb would still be one inch from the ground when the tree was a hundred feet high. Tree limbs don't slide up the tree like that. If you hang a horseshoe on a limb five feet high to-day, and nobody touches it, it will be on the same limb and only five feet high a hundred years from now."

Of course, this was true and we all agreed with Skippy, and got to talking about trees and why so many have limbs only high up. It is because the tender little first limbs die and break off. They get too much shade or animals eat them or something.

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Then we got to talking of what animals eat, and about caribou and elk, and about one thing and another, and we forgot all about rabbits.

About half an hour later, Orpheus Cadwallader came along in his rubber coat and rubber boots. He is the man that is watchman on the island and he is plump and pleasant and can tell some great stories of the river. We tried to coax him to come under with us and talk, but he said he had a trot-line he wanted to run and couldn't stop. He said the rain was about over; that it would be sunny in an hour. And it was. Somebody suggested that we go fishing, and we went.

CHAPTER IV

DO FISH CLIMB TREES?

IN the summer, when we are up there on Birch Island, we fish in quite a few places and in quite a few ways, but we don't do much fishing on our own island; it is about as poor a place as there is in the whole Mississippi River. Once in a while, though, we do go across the island to where the slough is, and try it. If the river is high enough, and not too muddy, we catch a few fish there, and sometimes we try it because it is so near — only a few hundred feet from the back doors of our cottages. So, this day, we got our cans of worms and our fishpoles and went back through the woods and weeds and nettles to see how the fishing was there.

All our cottages set on the bank of the "chute" or what is now the main channel of the river, but Orph Cadwallader's cottage sets back a couple of hundred feet or so, because he is the caretaker, and we went to the part of the slough back of Orpheus Cadwallader's cottage because we thought the fishing would be best there, but when we got there it looked pretty bad. Along the edges of the slough the weeds had grown tall and thick and beyond them was nothing but mud — just soft, slushy mud, slanting down to the water of the slough like the edge of a dinner plate.

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We tried to throw our lines far enough out to get to water deep enough to have fish in it, but it couldn't be done — the lines would not reach. We tried putting some driftwood on top of the slush mud, to walk out on, but that was no good either. When we put a foot on a stick of driftwood, it went right down in the mud, as if there was no bottom.

"Aw, come on!" Wampus said. "This is no good. If there are any big carp in there they can stay there, for all I care. We can't get out to where they are, and they can't come in to us. Let's go home."

We all thought the same. But Jibby Jones stood still.

"Wait a minute!" he said. "When I was in the North Woods with father, I saw them catching fish through the ice with saplings."

"Ice!" Wampus shouted. "Ice! I'd like to see some ice! There's not much ice around here that I can see."

"And a sapling wouldn't reach as far as our fish-poles do," said Tad.

"You don't understand," said Jibby. "What I mean to say is that they bent the saplings down and tied their lines on the tips of them. Then they set the saplings with a sort of trigger, so that when the fish bit at the bait the sapling sprung up and pulled the fish out."

"Come on; let's get home!" said Wampus. "The mosquitoes are eating me alive."

But Jibby aimed his nose toward a tall, thin elm

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sapling near the edge of the weeds and followed his nose.

"This tree will do," he said, and he took hold of it as high as he could reach and threw his weight on it. But his weight was not enough to bend it down.

"Come on, you fellows, and help," he said; "perhaps we will catch a good fish."

We laughed, but we all took hold of the tree. We began to bend it toward the slough.

"No, please!" Jibby said. "Not that way. Bend it in the other direction. Bend it along the shore. We have to bait it first."

So we shifted to another side of the elm and bent it down. We held it down, with the top touching the ground. Jibby looked at it doubtfully.

"It is too bad it isn't nearer the slough," he said; and then he said: "I've got it!"

He got the longest of our fishpoles and tied it to the top of the tree.

"That will give just that much more length," he said, and then he baited the hook with the nicest lot of worms you ever saw and set the bobber at what he thought was about the right height and told us to ease up on the tree.

We eased up until the end of the tree was about twenty feet from the ground, and then Jibby told us to swing it around, out over the slough, and we did it. We lowered away until the bait was in the water and the bobber floated. They were out in the deeper

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water, where fish ought to be if there were any. We tried to hold the tree steady, but it wobbled a good deal, and Jibby got a sound piece of driftwood and propped it under the tree.

“Now,” he said, “you can all sit on the tree and hold it down. I’m sorry we haven’t an automatic trigger to hold it, but we haven’t had time to make one. Perhaps this will do as well. You sit on the tree and I will watch the bobber, and when we get a bite I’ll say ‘Jump!’ then everybody jump lively, and we’ll have our fish.”

So we sat there and nothing happened.

And we sat there longer and nothing happened.

“There are no two ways about it,” Wampus said, “this is the craziest idea I ever heard of. Nobody but Jibby Jones would ever think of anything like this. Four boys and a complete tree, and a fish-pole, and Jibby Jones, all trying to catch one fish. We won’t catch a fish. But if we do catch a fish, you know what kind it will be — it will be a mud-cat as big as your little finger or a perch as big as your thumb.”

“Or a minnow, maybe,” said Skippy.

“Surely! A minnow,” I said. “Using a whole elm tree to catch a minnow!”

“We could sit here a hundred years,” said Wampus, “and we wouldn’t catch anything.”

Jibby did not hear us. He was keeping his eagle eye on the bobber.

“I think we had a nibble just then,” he said now.

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"You fellows want to be ready to jump when I say 'jump.'"

"We'll be ready," Wampus said. "Don't worry, Jibby; we'll be ready, in about one hundred years. If anybody can catch a fish this way, I'll —"

"Jump! Jump! Oh, jump!" Jibby Jones shouted just then, waving his hands and jumping himself for all he was worth.

I don't know whether we all jumped at once or not. All I know is that I got off the tree and it whacked me in the back of the head as it went on up and all four of us were on our backs in the weeds just in time to see the biggest carp I ever saw go sailing up into the air like a shot out of a cannon. I'll bet the carp was the most surprised fish in the Mississippi Valley right then. There wasn't any playing with him, as an angler does; one moment he was wondering where that nice bunch of worm bait came from and the next moment he was yanked out of the slough at about sixty miles an hour as that tree snapped up like a whip. There was enough strength in that tree to pull an ox out of the water, almost, and it spent it all on that one carp and all in one second, too.

"Whoop!" was all Wampus had time to say, and then the tree and the pole at the top of it did what any tree and pole would have done in the same circumstances. They snapped that carp off the hook like a giant throwing a mud ball from the end of a switch. We saw the carp sail up and up, twice as

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high as the tree itself and come down and down, inland from the slough.

I scrambled to my feet and Tad and Wampus and Skippy scrambled to their feet, and we made a rapid break for the direction the carp had taken.

"Stop! Listen! Hear where it falls!" Jibby Jones shouted, but we were too excited for that. We rushed into the woods and began beating through the weeds and nettles and looking up into the trees, and Jibby had to join us. We hunted for an hour, I guess, and then we gave it up. It was time to go home, anyway.

We went back to the slough to get our poles and things, and we got them and started home. The first house we came to was Wampus's, because that is nearest to Orpheus Cadwallader's cottage, which we had been almost back of, and when we got there Mr. and Mrs. Smale and Sue Smale were on the little front porch and Orpheus Cadwallader was standing at the foot of the porch steps with one foot on the bottom step and the biggest carp I ever saw was in his hands. It was a beauty.

"Y-e-s, M-i-s-t-e-r S-m-a-l-e," he was drawling in that slow, lazy way of his, "I always did think a carp was more of a land animal than most fish, and now I know it. This proves it. I've often seen carp wiggle across sand bars on their bellies, and I've often said I was sure they came up to my garden at night and ate the young vegetable tops, but now I know more than that. They climb trees, and

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I know they climb trees because this carp was in the maple alongside of my house, sitting in a crotch of a branch, eating maple leaves. There are some in its mouth now."

Sure enough, he showed us that there were leaves in the carp's mouth.

"But that doesn't quite prove it climbs trees, does it?" asked Mr. Smale. "It might have got in the tree in some other way."

"How could a carp get in a tree except by climbing it?" Orpheus Cadwallader drawled. "Of course, you needn't believe me, if you don't want to, but I'll believe carps climb trees as long as I live."

We knew, of course, that that carp had not climbed a tree. We knew exactly how it had got into that tree — our fishing tree had slung the carp so high in the air that it had alighted in the top of the maple tree. I nudged Wampus and grinned.

It was then Jibby Jones turned to us and spoke.

"Rabbits," he said, and then repeated it: "Rabbits, and carp, may climb trees, but you cannot be sure rabbits and carp do climb trees just because you happen to find rabbits and carp in trees."

Orpheus Cadwallader turned and looked at Jibby.

"Rabbits, hey?" he said. "I don't know about rabbits. I never saw a rabbit climb a tree, and I never saw a rabbit in a tree, so I say nothing about rabbits. But I do know about carp. I know carp can climb trees, because I saw this carp in the tree,

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and it was still alive and kicking. I saw that with my own eyes. And if the carp did not climb that tree, how did it get up that tree?"

"Maybe it leaped from the water to the tree," said Jibby.

"Foolishness! Nonsense!" Orpheus Cadwallader said. "I know better than that. A carp can't leap that far."

But we knew better, because that was just what that carp had done. It had made one jump from the slough to the tree. But had we helped it a little.

So Orph went waddling home with his tree-climbing carp, pretty mad because nobody would believe it had climbed the tree, but Jibby stood looking after him. When Orph had gone out of sight, Jibby turned to Skippy.

"Skippy," he drawled, with a twinkle in his eyes that sometimes came there, "you don't want to hunt for pirate's treasure, do you? A little while ago you said we might as well look for fish in the tops of trees as for pirate's treasure around here. I don't say there is pirate's treasure everywhere around here, but there does seem to be a fish in the top of a tree now and then."

Skippy grinned.

"All right!" he said. "Tell us about the land pirate again, Jibby. Anybody that can throw a carp into a tree-top has a right to believe in a land pirate's treasure being a thousand miles from where he got it."

CHAPTER V

THE FISHING PRIZE

THAT night, before we went to bed, the five of us sat on the riprap rocks in front of the cottages, and Jibby told all he knew about the land pirate and his treasure again, and we got up the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company. We sat there and swatted mosquitoes and talked like good friends and Dutch uncles, and swore a cross-my-heart and hope-to-die oath to be faithful and true to the constitution and by-laws of the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company. There wasn't any constitution or any by-laws, but that did not matter — we swore to be true to them, anyhow, and maybe, sometime when we had time, we might get up some, if we thought we needed them.

But, when we had talked it all over and had come right down to facts, the only thing about the treasure that Jibby seemed to be real sure of was that the old negro Mose had been awful dead earnest. That old negro had been mortal sure there was treasure somewhere. He would have bet a million dollars on it. And that was what made Jibby think there must be some treasure hidden somewhere. There was no doubt that there had been a land pirate named John A. Murrell.

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Talking it over together that way, we asked Jibby a million or two questions, and it came out that the old negro Mose had said that "Riverbank" was the key to where the treasure was hidden. There was no "Riverbank" on the map side of the map, but on the back of it the one word "Riverbank" was written, old Mose had said, and old Mose said his father had said that was the key. "You go whar Riverbank is, up the river whar black folks is free," was what his father had said. Of course, that was away back when there were slaves, and Mose was a slave then, and so was his father.

The other thing Jibby had to go on was the pine tree — the signal pine that every friend of John A. Murrell and his pirates set out in the corner of the lot or yard or farm. The thing to do, Jibby said, was to find a lone pine tree, because that would be a sign and a signal and a symbol and a sort of trademark, showing that place had something to do with John A. Murrell. We tried to think of lone pines, but, just offhand, we couldn't think of any that night. All we knew were planted in rows.

So there did not seem to be much to do but elect Wampus the Captain of the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company, and go to bed. We thought we would go up and down the river when we had time, and explore back into the country here and there, and look for lone pines, and, if we found one in the corner of a lot or farm, we would look for a likely treasure-hiding place.

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Early the next morning, Parcell, who runs the boathouse down at town, came up with my sister May and a load of groceries and meat for everybody, and he brought my dog along. My dog is one of the bulliest dogs you ever saw, but along about April that year all the hair came off his back, and mother said he was an awful sight, so we let a man take him, to grow his hair back on. The man was a horse doctor and good at making hairless dogs hairy again, and he had fixed Rover up fine. And now he had sent him back.

I was tickled to see Rover again, and he was tickled to see me, and I guess my mother was almost as glad, because some pretty tough customers live in houseboats on the river, sometimes. Most of the houseboaters are all right, and are kind and nice, but some mean ones come floating down the river, and you can never tell what they'll do. So a dog comes in handy, especially a good-sized dog like Rover.

The only thing I was sorry about was that Rover had come this particular day, because the next day I would have to tie him up and leave him at home, because it was the day of the Uncle Oscar Fishing Prize. You can't have a dog along when you are fishing from a skiff for a prize. And Uncle Oscar's Fishing Prize was one of the most important things of the whole summer, always.

The way of the Uncle Oscar Fishing Prize was this: Every year, as long as we had been going up to the island, Wampus Smale's Uncle Oscar had given

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a prize to the fellow who made the best fishing record on a certain day, and that day was Uncle Oscar's birthday. That was why we fished for the prize on that day, and not on another day.

This Uncle Oscar just lived and breathed on the river, as you might say, and loved it, and he thought nobody fished enough or boated enough or swam enough or loved the big old river enough. That was the way he was. He almost wept when he told about the old days when the river was full of fish and the big old packets and logging steamers were as thick as mosquitoes, and great long log rafts used to float down with huts built on them, and camp-fires, and men pushing the long sweeps to steer them.

That was why, every year, he offered the fishing prize, but we boys got so we didn't take much interest in it.

"He just gives it so Wampus can win it," Skippy Root said to me this year. "He knows Wampus is the best fisher, and he knows Wampus is sure to win it."

"Well," I said, "ain't you going to try for it? Fishing is luck, and sometime Wampus's luck is going to go back on him."

"Sure, I'm going to try," Skippy said. "I'm going to try, but not because I've got a chance to win. I'm going to try because Uncle Oscar Smale is a bully fellow and he'd feel bad if we didn't let on we were trying to win the prize he gives. But Wampus will win it, like he always does."

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I thought so, too, and so did Tad Willing. Wampus always won. But, when we saw the prize Wampus's Uncle Oscar offered this year, we did wish we had a chance. It was a jointed fishing-rod, with a five-dollar reel, and it was a beauty.

So, a week or so before Uncle Oscar's birthday, we were squatting on the shore of the river talking about things, and Jibby Jones came along and sat down beside us. We were talking about crawfish holes and where bees had their bee trees with the honey in them and all sorts of things, just as we happened to think of them. There was a yellow-jacket bee on a flower just in front of us, getting honey, and Skippy said he wished he knew where that bee's bee tree was.

Jibby Jones leaned over until his big nose almost touched the bee.

"I can't tell by this bee," he said, "but by and by there will be a bee come along and I can tell you."

Pretty soon the bee flew up and circled and went down and lit on a rock and walked around. Then it flew out over the river and back and zigzagged off. Then two or three other bees tried the flower for honey, and each time Jibby Jones put his nose close to it and said, "No; not this one." After a while a bee lit on the flower that seemed to satisfy Jibby.

"Now I can tell you," he said. "You watch this bee when it flies away."

So we did. When it got enough honey, it flew into the air and made a bee-line off for somewhere.

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Jibby pulled a pocket compass out of his pants pocket.

“A bit west of south-west-by-west,” he said. “Any time you want to find that bee tree you start from here and go just west of south-west-by-west and you’ll find it. That bee was going home.”

“How did you know that one was going home and the others were not?” Wampus asked. “Was that a pilot bee?”

“Maybe it was,” said Jibby.

“Well, how did you know it was a pilot bee, then?” asked Skippy.

“Maybe I could smell the difference,” Jibby said. “I’ve got a lot of nose; it ought to be good for something.”

So we all laughed, but we didn’t know whether Jibby was fooling or in earnest. That was the way he was. Sometimes he fooled just for the fun of it, and sometimes he was in earnest. We could never quite make out which he was, but we had found out one thing — if we waited long enough and didn’t keep joshing him too much, he always ended up by telling us what the truth was. So now Wampus sort of laughed.

“Aw, quit!” he said. “You can’t smell like that; you can’t smell the difference between one kind of bee and another kind. Nobody can; I never heard such nonsense. I bet even my Uncle Oscar can’t, and he knows just about everything.”

“Has he got a nose like mine?” Jibby asked.

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Well, Wampus couldn't say he had, because nobody we knew had a nose like Jibby. There were no other noses like it. It was the biggest and thinnest nose anybody ever saw.

"No," Wampus said, "Uncle Oscar's nose is just a common nose."

"And does he exercise it regular?" Jibby asked.

"What do you mean by 'exercise it regular'?" Wampus asked.

"Why, exercise it right along," said Jibby. "Like you exercise your arms and legs if you want to make them good for what they are good for. Or like you would exercise your eyes if you wanted them to be good at seeing things. Or your ears if you wanted them to be 'cute at hearing things. You know you can do that, don't you?"

"How?" asked Skippy.

"Well, the Indians did it," said Jibby. "They began when they were young, and they exercised their ears and their eyes, and soon they could hear the grass grow and see a hair as far as you can see a fish-pole. You can exercise your nose the same way, can't you?"

"Well, it sounds sort of reasonable," said Tad Willing.

"Of course, it sounds reasonable," Jibby said, as pleasant as could be. "Can you do this?"

He put his thumb against the side of his nose and pushed it until most of his nose lay flat against his left cheek; then he put his thumb on the other side of

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his nose and pushed until his nose lay flat against his right cheek. We all tried it, but we couldn't do it. Wampus was the worst at it, because his nose is a pug and sticks up.

"You don't exercise your noses, that's why," Jibby said. "I don't blame you. It is no business of mine what you do with your noses. But I exercise mine and keep it limber and flexible. I get up every morning and push my nose all around my face, to keep it keen and lively. It would be mighty dangerous for me if I ever let my nose get stiff and hard."

"Why would it?" Skippy wanted to know.

"Because it's my jib sail," Jibby said, as solemn as an owl. "If I got out in a big wind sometime, say near the edge of a big precipice, and the wind caught my nose, it might blow me over and dash me to pieces on the rocks below. I've got to watch out for that, with a nose like mine. I've got to keep my nose limber, so that if a big wind comes up I can furl my jib, or jibe it to port or starboard, to steer me away from the precipice."

We didn't say anything. We just looked at one another.

"I might be out in Arizona, or somewhere else, where the wind blows hard for months at a time," Jibby went on, just as solemn as before, "and a nose like mine would be a nuisance. The wind would catch it on one side and whirl me around one way, and then it would catch it on the other side and whirl me around the other way, and I'd never be

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able to get anywhere if I didn't keep my nose soft and flexible, so I could lay it back against my face and fasten it there with a strip of adhesive plaster."

"Oh, boy!" Skippy said then, because that was almost too much.

"But," Jibby went on, "you fellows don't need to exercise your noses that way because they don't amount to much as jibs, anyway."

"I'll say mine don't," said Wampus, touching his pug.

"No," said Jibby seriously. "I've often felt sorry for you, Wampus; having a stub like that. But it's a good nose for smelling with, if you train it right. It ought to be a quick smeller — a lot quicker than mine — because it is so short. Smells ought to get in quicker. The only trouble is that you don't any of you know how to smell."

"You don't have to know how to smell things," said Tad. "You just smell them, and that's all there is to it; you can't help smelling them."

"Did you ever read James Latimer's book called 'Odors and How to Improve the Sense of Smell'?" Jibby asked.

"No," we all said.

"Neither did I," said Jibby. "I never even heard of it, because there isn't any such book, but there might be. Maybe I'll write one myself, sometime. The trouble with you fellows is that you don't think about your noses. I do think about mine; I think a

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lot about it. I can't help thinking about it, there's such a lot of it."

That was true, anyway.

"You fellows just go around smelling what happens to come to you to be smelled," Jibby went on. "You can tell a violet from a fish by the smell of it, maybe, but you don't exercise your smelling apparatus. Can you tell the difference between a channel catfish and a mud catfish when they are down under the water ten feet or so?"

"No, and nobody can. Nobody can even smell a fish when it is under water," said Wampus. "Can you?"

"No matter!" said Jibby, sort of tossing his head. "What I say is that, if people trained their noses and exercised their smelling powers properly, they might smell smells that they don't even imagine they can smell now. That stands to reason. There are dozens of kinds of violets, but the most that most people can tell when they smell a violet is that it is a violet. A botanist, that has trained his nose to smell violets and knows there are dozens of different kinds of violets, gets so, after a while, he can tell most of them from the others just by the smell. And it is that way with everything."

"Well, what good does it do?" asked Skippy.

"Everything you know does some good," said Jibby. "That's what knowing things is for, to do us good. It is just the 'little bit more' that makes anything the 'most' instead of leaving it the 'least.'"

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"I guess that's so," I said. "It's partly because Wampus knows a little bit more about fishing than we do that he wins the Uncle Oscar Fishing Prize every year."

"You mean he can smell the fish when they are under water?" Jibby asked.

"Pshaw, no!" said Skippy. "That's nonsense."

"Is it?" Jibby asked, grinning a little.

"Well, if it isn't," said Skippy, "why don't you go in for the Uncle Oscar Prize this year?"

"Oh, I oughtn't to do that," Jibby said. "It wouldn't be fair. What if I could smell the fish when they are under water? I'd know where all the fish were and you fellows that belong on the island here wouldn't have a chance. No, I'd better not compete for that prize; I'd win it sure."

CHAPTER VI

THE PRIZE-WINNER

WELL, we all laughed! It was a little too ridiculous, the solemn way in which Jibby said he would be sure to win the prize. We had all tried to win the prize, and we knew no one but Wampus could win it; he was just a natural-born fisher and couldn't be beat.

"Oh, very well, then," Jibby said, pretending to be offended. "Just for that I will try to win it, and I will win it. I'm sorry to take it away from Wampus, but I'll have to do it."

We all laughed again.

"I suppose," Tad said to Jibby, "you'll go right home and give your nose some extra exercise now, won't you?"

"Well, if you see me doing queer things with the old jib, don't be surprised," Jibby said.

The next few days, though, we certainly began to be worried and to think there might be something in what Jibby had more than hinted to us. He did some mighty queer things, and we watched him do them. He would stand with his nose in the air and sniff. He would stand with his nose up and sniff four or five times, and then turn his head just an inch and sniff four or five times more, and then turn his head again and sniff again, and so on. Some-

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times he would pull a blade of grass and sniff at one end of it and then turn it around and sniff at the other end, and keep this up five minutes at a time.

Then he began sniffing the old Mississippi River. He would lie in a skiff with his head over the edge and his nose close to the water and sniff. Then he would get on the seat and row a distance and lie down and sniff again. A few minutes later, we caught him with fish scales, sniffing them one after another — a bass scale and a perch scale and a piece of channel catfish skin and a piece of mud catfish tail, and so on. Then, while we watched him, he put them one at a time in a pail of water, and sniffed at the water. He kept changing them in the water, first one and then the other, and he sniffed each time. It seemed plain enough to us that he was giving his nose some good exercise.

About eleven o'clock, on the fishing-prize day, Wampus's Uncle Oscar came up to the island. He brought the jointed fishing-rod and the reel with him, so we could see what the prize was going to be, and I got him off alone and asked him what he thought about noses. I asked him if he thought Jibby Jones could really smell fish when they were under water, and if a person could exercise a nose and get it so it could smell things other noses could not smell.

"Why, yes, George," he said slowly. "I do think a nose can be trained quite a little if a person goes about it right. That stands to reason. But I don't

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take any stock in this idea that a person can smell fish under water. Does Jibby say he can?"

"Well, no," I had to admit. "He hasn't said so out and out; he just hinted it, as you might say. I'll tell you one thing, though: he's got Wampus frightened. And there was the way he smelled that bee and knew it was the pilot bee."

"What's that?" Uncle Oscar asked. "Tell me about that."

When I had told him, he laughed.

"You boys want to look out for your Jibby Jones," he said. "He's a bright one. He may look a little queer, but some of the brightest men in the world have been the queerest lookers; their looks were out of a rut and their brains were out of a rut, too. Tell me one thing, George; can Jibby see as well as he says he can smell?"

"No, of course not," I said. "I mean, he sees things we don't take the trouble to see, sometimes, but his eyes can't see very far. That is why he has to wear glasses. He's near-sighted."

"Has to poke his nose pretty close into things to see them?" said Uncle Oscar. "If he wanted to see exactly how a bee looked, for instance, he would have to poke his nose almost into a bee, would he?"

"Yes, that's so," I said.

"Well, you notice this the next time you look at a bee," said Uncle Oscar. "The part of a bee back of its wings — its abdomen — is striped. When a bee goes out for honey, it goes for two things — a square

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meal for itself and some honey or some pollen to take back to the hive. A bee is greedy, too; it stuffs itself while the chance is good. If you watch a bee, you'll see that the longer it feeds, the bigger and longer its abdomen gets. Especially longer. As it fills up, the stripes get farther apart. That's how Jibby 'smelled' that bee, George. He poked his nose close to it so his eyes could see it, and he saw that its abdomen was swelled and stretched as much as it could be. That meant that the bee was ready to call it a day's work and go back to the hive. So your Jibby knew that when the bee left the flower it would probably make a 'bee-line' for home. And he was right. That's how he 'smelled' that 'pilot' bee. It wasn't a pilot bee, and he didn't smell it. So you and Wampus want to look out for Jibby Jones. This bee business makes me think he's going to win the prize, or thinks he is. He's a mighty smart boy."

The next time I saw Jibby, which was about half an hour after that, I asked him:

"Well, how's the old smeller getting along, Jibby? Is it going to win the prize?"

"I'll tell you, George," Jibby said, "I have hopes. I don't say I'll win, but I'm trying."

"It will be an awful thing if it is windy this afternoon and you have to adhesive your nose shut against your cheek, won't it?" I laughed.

Jibby put his finger to his nose and wiggled his nose at me, and then we both laughed.

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"I know how you smelled the pilot bee, Jibby," I told him.

"Do you?" he said, and it did not seem to bother him at all. "Just see if you and Wampus can see how I smell out the best and biggest fish this afternoon."

The afternoon turned out to be the best sort for fishing. It was cloudy, but not too cloudy, and a nice riffle on the water, but not too rough. The place Wampus's Uncle Oscar picked out for the contest was the slough at the upper end of our island, and that meant we would have to fish from skiffs, which is about the best way, anyhow.

There was not much of a gathering to see the contest. You can't get mothers to be very interested in such things, except to say, "Oh, how nice!" or, "Oh, I'm sorry!" after it is all over, and our fathers — all except Jibby's — went down to town every day to work. So the audience was just Wampus's Uncle Oscar and Jibby's father. They walked up to the slough together while we were rowing up, and they sat on the bank and watched us fish. We each had a skiff.

When we got to the slough, Jibby was ahead, and he ran his skiff ashore and waited for us.

"I'm a butter-in at this game," he said, "so you fellows go ahead and pick out your places first, and then I'll take mine."

I suppose we ought to have let Jibby have first choice, but we didn't think of it. Wampus rowed to the place he liked best and let down his anchor rock,

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and then the rest of us got as close to him as Uncle Oscar's rules allowed. One boat-length away from each other was the rule. The other rules were that every fish counted. The one of us that got the most fish, no matter what size, scored twenty-five. The one that got the one biggest fish scored another twenty-five. The one that got the biggest weight of fish, after they were cleaned and ready to cook, scored fifty. That made the most that could be scored one hundred. We were to fish from one o'clock until five o'clock that afternoon, and we all had lunch — sandwiches and apples and bananas and water — so we could eat whenever we wanted to. The only other rule was that it was all worm fishing; we had to use worms for bait.

As soon as Wampus got his boat settled, he baited up and put his line over, and we all hustled up and did the same thing. In a minute, almost, Wampus shouted:

“First fish!”

He had it, too. It was a good channel catfish, and when he unhooked it he held it up and shouted:

“Oh, you Jibby! Come on with your fishing!”

Jibby hadn't rowed out from the shore yet. Now he backed his skiff out carefully and leaned over while he rowed with one oar, and sniffed at the water over the side of the boat. He rowed here and he rowed there, and then, all of a sudden, he backed water and plumped his rock overboard and anchored. He was about twenty-five feet from us.

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"Well," Wampus said, "maybe he didn't smell fish there, but he picked out a good place. I thought some of fishing there myself."

Jibby took his time. He shortened up the rope to his rock anchor, and he looked to see that his fish-pole and line and hook were just as he wished them to be, and he took out a pocket rule and measured how deep his bobber was set, as if it had to be just right to a part of an inch. Then he put his line over very carefully and — whang! — the bobber went under like a flash.

"Jibby's got one!" I shouted.

"Shut up!" Wampus said, sort of cross. "We can't catch anything if you yell all the time." So we kept quiet and watched Jibby and our own bobbers. He had a perch, and it was a big one, almost three pounds. Wampus opened his eyes some when he saw it, because a three-pound perch is a good-sized fish and might be good for twenty-five points if nobody got a bigger one. Just then Skippy pulled in a mud catfish about as big as his hand, so we all got busy fishing as hard as we knew how.

It was lovely up there in the slough. The big elms and maples hung over and were draped with vines, and some sweet flower was making the air sweet. There were a few mosquitoes, but we did not mind them much; we were used to them. Jibby's father and Wampus's Uncle Oscar sat on the bank and smoked and watched.

Well, in an hour or so Wampus was away ahead of

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Tad and Skippy and me, like he always was at fishing, but he was fishing hard and changing his bobber every few minutes, because Jibby Jones was three fish ahead of him.

"I guess he's got a real nose for fish," Wampus whispered to us. "He's smelled out the best fishing-hole in this whole slough; that's what he has. I wish I had gone there instead of here. I'm a better fisherman than he is, and I know it and you know it, and if he beats me it will just be his nose that does it."

"Then I wish I had his kind of nose," I said, for I was so far behind that I knew I could never catch up unless I caught a whale.

Just then a school of small perch must have come by, for Wampus caught four in succession. That cheered him up, but not for long, because Jibby kept right on catching. Now and then Jibby would pull a paper from his pocket and look at it, and take his pocket rule from his pocket and set his bobber different, and catch another fish.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the sun was pretty hot, and even Wampus said the fish had stopped biting right, but old Jibby kept right on pulling one out now and then. When one side of his boat didn't give him any fish, he would try the other side, but first he always sniffed to see if the fish were down there. So, after Wampus had not caught any for about half an hour, he tried smelling for fish, too. He leaned over and sniffed at the water.

"Can't smell a thing," he said.



Arthur G. Dove

“ I GUESS HE’S GOT A REAL NOSE FOR FISH ”

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The funny thing was that, right along through the heat of the afternoon, when fishing is the worst, Jibby kept on pulling in a fish every now and then. He hadn't caught so many more than Wampus when the fish were biting easy, but he had kept up with him, and now, that they were not biting for Wampus, Jibby forged right ahead.

"There's no use talking, fellows," Wampus said. "I'm convinced. Jibby can smell out the fish. He smelled out the best fishing-hole on this whole slough, and that's all there is to it. I've got a chance yet, but I do wish I had a can of nice fresh lively worms."

"Yours most all gone?" Skippy asked.

"No," Wampus told him, "but they're mighty withered, what I've got left. If I was a fish, I'd be ashamed to tackle such sick-looking worms."

Just about then the fish began biting again, but it looked as if they had got together and decided to help Jibby beat Wampus. Old Jibby just pulled them in as fast as he could take them off his hook, and just before five o'clock he got something on his line that acted like a ton of brick. It was only a carp, but it was a ten-pound one, and Jibby was mighty careful, and got it into the boat.

"Aw, what's the use!" Wampus said. "He's got these fish trained."

Then Uncle Oscar, over on the bank, stood up and shouted, "Time's up, boys!" — and we knew Jibby had won. We didn't know how far he had won until we counted up the fish, and weighed them after they

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were cleaned. Old Jibby had the biggest fish, and he had the most fish, and he had the most weight of cleaned fish; he had the whole one hundred points, and he could have thrown away twenty fish and still have had the hundred points. Wampus was mighty disgusted.

It wasn't until after we were home again and the fish had been weighed, and Wampus's Uncle Oscar had handed the prize rod and reel to Jibby, that he said to Jibby:

"Well, son, I've fished on this river a good many years, but you've taught me something to-day."

"How to smell out fishing-holes?" Wampus wanted to know.

Uncle Oscar looked at Jibby and laughed.

"You tell them, Jibby," he said. "Your father told me. Tell them how you smelled out the fish."

Jibby took his nose in his fingers and wiggled it.

"About a week ago," he said, "I happened to stick my old nose-jib in a book, and that was when I smelled out these fish. I thought perhaps I might want to try for the prize, and I heard that old Izaak Walton was a great fisherman, so I stuck my nose in his book and tried to smell out something. Izaak Walton was the father of anglers, you know, George."

"I know," I said, pretty cheap, because I had lent the book to Jibby, but had never read it, be-

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cause it was all about English fish, and not about Mississippi River fish.

"Well," Jibby said, "first, I asked Orpheus Cadwallader where the best fishing-holes were, up in the slough here, and how deep I ought to set my bobber for the different fish, and he told me. I thought he ought to know, because he is the caretaker here and the best fisherman I know. That's why I went to the hole I did go to. Orpheus Cadwallader told me it was good."

"That's all right," Skippy said, "but what did you smell out of that Izaak Walton book; that's what we want to know."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Jibby. "You know what I told you? I said it is just the 'little bit more' that makes anything the 'most'? I knew I couldn't fish against Wampus unless I had the 'little bit more.' So I went to the Izaak Walton book, and the only thing I found there that I didn't know was scouring the worms."

"Scouring the worms! What is that?" asked Wampus, opening his eyes pretty wide.

"Walton tells how, in his book," said Jibby. "You dig your worms ahead of time, and put them in wet moss, in a box, and let them be there. Angle-worms eat mud, you know, and they're full of mud. If you put them in wet moss, they don't have any mud to eat and they get clean and bright and husky. They get used to being wet, too. They get brighter in color. They don't drown so quick when they are

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in the water, and they can wiggle harder and longer, and stay alive better, and the fish see them quicker and like them better."

"Shucks!" said Wampus. "Was that it?"

"Sure, it was!" said Jibby. "I figured that your worms would wash out pale quicker than mine, and that by the middle of the afternoon they would be pretty sick worms, in a hot tin can, while mine, in a box of moss, would be cool and fresh and lively. And they were! It was as if I had live worms to fish with and you had dead ones."

"And you got that out of a book that was written maybe a couple of hundred years ago?" I asked him.

"Sure, I did!" said Jibby. "I've got a nose that can smell common sense that far."

Well, that beat us! That beat Wampus, too.

"You win!" he said. "You had us all fooled, Jibby. You deserve the prize. You've got a wonderful nose!"

So that was all there was to it. We all laughed, and Jibby laughed, and Wampus's Uncle Oscar laughed. Then, all of a sudden, Wampus's Uncle Oscar put his nose in the air and sniffed.

"Um-yum!" he said. "I've got a fine nose, too. I can smell fish frying, and it certainly smells good to me. Can you smell it, Jibby?"

Jibby put his nose in the air and sniffed.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I can smell three channel catfish and four perch."

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Then he sniffed again.

“Two of the catfish are fried on one side, and the other catfish and the four perch are fried on the other side,” he said.

And that’s how Jibby was; he was a dandy. He liked to fool, but there was always something back of his fooling. This time it was a fried fish supper. So we went to wash up and have it, for we were all eating at Wampus’s house. And while Wampus was washing, he turned to Jibby and said:

“Well, Jibby, if your nose can smell out things so extra well, why don’t you give it a little more exercise and then smell out that land pirate’s treasure?”

“Maybe I will, Wampus, if you say to. You’re the Captain and the orders have to come from you,” Jibby said.

But none of us knew then how soon we were going to be a lot more excited about that land pirate’s treasure.

CHAPTER VII

THE TOUGH CUSTOMER

WELL, we all had a good time at dinner, and Wampus's Uncle Oscar made a speech and gave Jibby Jones the rod and reel, and Jibby made us laugh by saying we mustn't blame him for winning the prize, because it wasn't his fault he had an extra good nose; he said it was his Grandfather Parmenter's fault, that he had inherited the nose from. Then Wampus's Uncle Oscar said that it was all right to say "nose," but that the kind of "nose" Jibby used was brains, and that — on the river or off the river — the fellow that had brains and used them always stood the best chance of winning.

So we ate fried fish until we couldn't eat any more, and then we sat around outside until bedtime, and I tied Rover to one of the posts under our cottage, and we all went home and to bed.

Maybe I had eaten too much fried fish. Anyway, I lay awake awhile and heard Orpheus Cadwallader waddling past the house, going his rounds to see that everything was all right, and I heard Rover get up and walk to the end of his rope and wag his tail at Orpheus. His tail thumped against one of the posts, and I knew he was wagging it.

A little while later, Rover began to howl, and he

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is one of the loudest howlers in the world, I guess. The moon was one of the things he was fondest of howling at; he seemed to think it was hung in the sky as an insult to dogs. Whenever there was a moon and Rover saw it, he howled. And the other thing that made him howl was being tied up. He would stand being tied up for an hour or so, because he expected I would come and untie him, but, if he was tied for much longer than an hour, he felt hurt and miserable and neglected, and he would begin to howl. He would begin with an "Arr-oo———" and hang on to the "oo" until it quivered and trembled, and everybody within a mile wondered if it was ever going to stop, and got nervous, and tossed in bed, and swore. And then Rover would take another breath and begin another "Arr-oo———" longer and louder than ever. And keep it up all night, unless somebody went and untied him.

The reason I tied Rover that night was because he is a wandering dog. He likes to explore. And what he likes to explore for is dead fish, mostly, and the deader the better. If you didn't tie him up at night, he would wander off until he found a dead fish, and then he would roll in it. The deader the fish was, the better he liked it; he thought it was perfumery, I guess. He would wander for miles around our island, and even swim across the slough to Oak Island and wander there, hunting a dead fish to perfume himself with. And he was such an affectionate and loving dog, and so proud of himself when he was all

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perfumed up, that mother and the rest of us just hated him when he was that way.

If I had known Rover was coming up that day, I would have gone around the shore of our island and the shore of Oak Island and got rid of all the dead fish, but Rover's coming was a surprise, and we had had the fishing-prize contest that day, so all there was to do was to tie him up and let him howl. His howling was pretty bad, but it wasn't as bad as dead fish, which is about the worst thing there is.

Well, after Orpheus Cadwallader passed our cottage again, going back, I turned over on my stomach and hoped I'd go to sleep, and I expected Rover would have a fine all-night howl, but all of a sudden he stopped howling and began to bark. It was his angry "Woof! woof!" bark, with a mean snarl at the end, which meant somebody was around who had no business to be around.

I sat up in bed, and I could feel the old cottage joggle as Rover jerked at his rope, and then, suddenly, the rope broke and off Rover went, barking to beat the band, full tilt toward the slough back of our cottages. About halfway there, I should judge, he came up with what had set him to barking. I heard a rough voice say, "Get away from here! Get away from here!" and a club thumping on Rover's back, and more barking, and swearing, and then Rover yipped, and began to scream — if you can call it that — the way a dog does when it is hurt, or has its paw run over by a wagon, or breaks a toe.

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In a second I was out of bed and getting into my clothes, and I heard Rover come yipping and whining back toward the cottage. I did not have many clothes to put on, and in a couple of seconds I was downstairs, and by the time I was out there and Rover was whining at my feet, Wampus and his Uncle Oscar and Skippy and Tad and Jibby were out there, too, and we heard Orph Cadwallader coming running as fast as such a fat man could.

Orph had his shotgun, and Wampus's Uncle Oscar had a pistol, and Jibby had brought along an electric torch. We looked at Rover's foot and saw it was hurt pretty bad, and that one of his ears was cut where it had been hit, and we were all pretty mad. Nobody had a right to be on our island but us, and most of the time nobody was there but the women and us kids and Orph Cadwallader, and tramps had no business there. They were too dangerous.

So Wampus's Uncle Oscar took the electric torch from Jibby and said:

"You boys stay back here; this is a man's job. Orph and I will attend to this!"

So the five of us, Jibby and Wampus and Tad and Skippy and I, we went along with Orph and Wampus's uncle. I held the piece of rope that was tied around Rover's neck, and he limped along, whining. We made quite a procession, and when we looked back we could see that all the cottages were lighted up. Everybody was out of bed. You couldn't expect us to stay back when there was so much excitement.

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We went through the woods and, before we had gone very far, the light from the electric torch picked out two men who were standing waist-deep in the stinging nettles under the trees, waiting for us to come up to them. It was easy to guess that they had started away from where Rover had met them, and that they had then heard us and stopped. And that was not like river-rats or tramps who had come to snoop around and steal what they could and then get away again. That kind come in skiffs, and, if you see them, they scoot for their skiffs and row away as fast as they can. But these men waited for us.

“What’s this mean? What you doing on this island? What you hurt this dog for?” Wampus’s Uncle Oscar asked when we came up to the men.

They were river-rats, all right, or tramps, or toughs of some kind; you could tell that by their looks. And one was the toughest-looking customer I ever did see! He had only one eye and that was an ugly one — keen and wicked-looking. His right hand had only two fingers and a thumb, and there were three deep scars across his face. He had a regular pirate’s bunch of black whiskers, and all he needed was a red sash with a couple of pistols stuck in it, and a cutlass, and a red handkerchief tied around his head, and a pair of brass rings in his ears, to look like a real pirate. And when he moved out from the nettles we saw he had one wooden leg — scarred and chipped as if he had used it to break rocks.

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His mate, the other man, was smaller and meaner-looking, if anybody could look meaner. He looked like a rat — sneaky-looking. We called him the Rat when we talked about him afterward. So when Wampus's uncle shouted at them, they looked at us.

"That's all right, boss; that's all right!" the Tough Customer said. "No harm meant. Pardner and I don't mean no harm. We didn't know anybody was on this island. We wouldn't do no harm."

"What did you try to kill that dog for, then?" Wampus's uncle asked, and no fooling, either.

"Well, he come at us, boss," the Tough Customer said. "We was just walking through here and the dog come at us. So I took a swipe at him with a club. Anybody would, boss, when a dog comes at him that way."

"Well, you look here!" Wampus's uncle said. "This is a private island, owned by folks, and nobody is allowed on it. And no nonsense about it, either. You get off, and you stay off, or you're liable to get shot, or worse. You get off this island now, and you stay off it hereafter."

"Yes, sure, boss!" the Tough Customer said. "We'll do that; we don't mean no harm; we wouldn't touch anything, anyhow."

And that might have been all right, but just then something went "Arr-awk — arr-awk!" — and anybody would have known it was a chicken. Orpheus Cadwallader made about five steps, and grabbed the

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Rat, and stuck his hand into the Rat's shirt, and, sure enough, in the back of the Rat's shirt was one of Orpheus's own chickens. It gave a flop of its wings and scooted for its coop, making big flying leaps and scolding as it went. So Orph made a swipe at the Rat with the end of his gun, but the Rat dodged, and then turned and ran as hard as his legs could carry him. Orph let fly with both barrels of his shotgun, but there were too many trees; he did not even pepper the Rat.

"So!" said Wampus's uncle. "That's the idea, is it? Well, we'll just see you off the island right here and now. Where's your boat?"

The Tough Customer looked at the pistol Wampus's uncle carried, and I guess he decided that Wampus's uncle wouldn't shoot a man in the back, not unless he ran, anyway, and he turned and stumped off toward the bank of the slough until he came to the path, and then he turned down the path a hundred yards, and all of us following him.

There was a place there where the arum and pickerel weed came close to the shore, but the water was two or three feet deep, and tied to a tree there was a shanty-boat — one of the smallest and worst old shanty-boats I ever saw. It did not look over ten feet long, and it wasn't more than five feet wide, with not a window in it, and the deck not over two feet wide. The boards of which it was made were thin and old and warped, and the only power was a ten-foot pole with a board nailed on one end.

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When he came to the shanty-boat, the Tough Customer stopped to untie his shore line and threw it aboard. He did not say another word. He took his ten-foot pole from the roof of the shanty-boat and braced it against the shore and pushed, and the boat slithered among the weeds and glided out from the shore.

We stood and watched until the shanty-boat was out in the middle of the slough, where the current caught it and swung it slowly downstream. Then the Tough Customer rested and looked toward us, and swore at us strong and steady for a long while, and Wampus's uncle said it was all over, and we went home. I looked Rover's paw and ear over, and saw they were not so bad, so I tied him up again and went to bed. Of course, mother asked all about what had happened, and said she had been frightened when she heard the gunshots, but she was glad everything was all right and the tramps were off the island.

The next morning there was only one thing for me to do if I wanted to have mother let me keep Rover on the Island, and that was to explore for dead fish and get them out of the way. So we all went — all five of us boys. We went down the chute side of the island first, but we didn't find a single dead fish, because all the folks know about Rover, and they don't leave any dead dogfish or other kinds on shore when they catch them. So we got as far as the end of the island, downstream, and started

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along up the slough side of the island, and all of a sudden Wampus stopped short.

"Look there," he said, bending down and pointing. "There's that Tough Customer's shanty-boat. He didn't quit the island. He only floated down and landed lower down."

We all bent low and saw the shanty-boat. It was in a sort of small cove, where the willows must have hid it from the slough, and I don't suppose anybody could have seen it from the island except from the very spot where we were.

"Come on!" I whispered. "Let's go and get Orph and your Uncle Oscar, and tell them."

But Jibby Jones put out a hand and held me back.

"This doesn't look right," he said, shaking his head. "This looks evil to me. Those men were told to get off the island, and they said they would get off the island, and there's no honest reason why they should be on the island. All they had to do when they were out in the slough last night was to let their shanty-boat drift and they would have gone on down past here. They must mean some devilment on the island, and we ought to know what it is."

Well, that seemed reasonable, and Jibby said what we must do. We must crawl up through the willows and investigate. The only trouble was Rover. I couldn't tie him to a tree because he would howl, and, if I dragged him through the willows, he would see the shanty-boat and bark, and, if I turned

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him loose, he would probably jump all around and go to the shanty-boat and scare the Tough Customer and the Rat into fits. But Jibby fixed that. He said the thing for me to do was to take Rover and go back and get Orph Cadwallader and Wampus's uncle. So I went.

Jibby and the boys crawled as close to the shanty-boat as they could, Indian fashion, and lay in the willows, and they were in luck, because the Tough Customer and the Rat were talking.

"No, sir!" the Tough Customer was saying. "I don't stay on any island where caretakers go around with shotguns, shooting them off any time of the day or night."

"I don't see that you've got any kick to make about shotguns," the Rat said, in his whining voice. "I'm the one that got shot at."

"I don't care who got shot at," the Tough Customer said. "Four or five barrels of cider wouldn't pay me for getting my hide full of birdshot, not if it was the hardest cider on earth. And you don't know that they hid the cider on this island — you only think so. It may be on any island in the whole river. You just forget that cider, pardner, and let's get to hunting that treasure I know about."

"Well, it ain't playing me square," the Rat whined. "A bargain is a bargain, and the bargain was that, if I paid my money and bought this shanty-boat, you would help me find that cider first, and help me get away with it and sell it. And I as good

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as know it was on this island them barrels of cider was hid. And, if so, on this island is where we want to be."

"And get shot full of birdshot or, maybe, buckshot," sneered the Tough Customer. "Why, man alive! just now after these island folks is all roused up is no time to hunt around on this island for a few pesky barrels of cider. They'll all be carrying shotguns for the next month or so. No, sir! Now is the time to stay away from this island. We can come back later on if you want to, but now is the time to be hunting that land pirate's treasure."

"You don't know how much it is, and you don't know where it is, and you don't even know if there is any," complained the Rat.

"All right!" said the Tough Customer. "Maybe I know more than you think I do. Maybe I ain't told you all I know yet. Maybe I thought I would just wait and see if you was a reasonable cuss and willing to do the wise thing, or if you was a sort of idiot that would want to hang around an island and get shot full of buckshot and bullets for a few barrels of no-account cider. How about that?"

"'Tain't right! 'Tain't right!" the Rat complained. "Pardners ought to be fair and square and tell all. Next thing you'll be saying you won't split half and half."

"Half and half was what I said, and half and half holds good," said the Tough Customer. "And this will, maybe, be a big thing. I'll play fair with you if

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you play fair with me. Will you play fair? Hope to die and may your throat be cut, if you don't?"

"Hope to die and may my throat be cut if I don't!" said the Rat. "Fair and square, or may the dogs eat us!"

"Now, that's talking," said the Tough Customer. "Look here, now!"

They heard him feeling around among the boards of the shanty-boat, inside and nearest the corner to the boys.

"I got a map of the whole business," the Tough Customer said. "You didn't know that, did you? It's been right there in that split board back of the lantern ever since I come aboard this boat. And you would never have seen it if you hadn't played fair and square with me, you bet! Gimme that board there to spread it out on."

They heard the Rat move around and then the Tough Customer spoke again.

"When I was down there in Helena, like I told you," he said, "they stuck me in jail for ten days for being a vagrant, and there was a fellow in my cell with me, see? A red-headed fellow with a scar over one eye. And he shines up to me about the second day, and says I'm the sort of man he's looking for. He says he knows where pirate's treasure is, and he's getting up a gang to go and get it. Only, he's in jail for three months for stealing a hog, you understand? And he needs somebody that's going to be free soon, to make some preparations and one thing

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and another. So he shows me this map that he stole off an old nigger down there."



"This map?" said the Rat.

"This map, which was drawn by the land pirate's own brother to show where the treasure was," said the Tough Customer. "So I said I'd go in with him, and he explained all he knew about the map, and the night before I was turned loose I stole the map off him, and I dropped it through the window. And the next day, when I was turned loose, I went around under the window and picked up the map and beat it for up here as fast as I could. Because this here word on the back of the map is the key word. 'Riverbank,' see? That's the place to go to, to start out from, to find the treasure."

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"Well, you couldn't be much nearer," said the Rat.

"All right! And here's the map itself," said the Tough Customer. "You say you know places hereabouts; what do you make of it?"

"Let me get a good look at it," said the Rat. "Why, pshaw! It looks plain enough! Here's the river, because it is marked 'river.' And this bent business is a slough coming into the river. And this crooked line would be a creek emptying into the slough."

"That's how I'd make it out," said the Tough Customer.

"Sure!" said the Rat. "And these lines mean two roads crossing each other, don't they? And this is a house or barn in the lot at the crossroads. And here's a cross-mark — this X here. That ought to be where the treasure is buried, hey?"

"Well, now, would it be?" asked the Tough Customer. "How about this arrow? This arrow points right to where the road crosses the creek. Don't that mean that that is where the treasure is? Suppose there is a bridge there, or a culvert. Mightn't the money be hid there? Well, we could look both places. How about this '23 miles' and 'Greenland'?"

"Greenland? Sure enough, that says Greenland!" said the Rat, all excited. "Why, pardner, this is the easiest thing you ever saw! I know where this Greenland is — Greenland is a crossroads store up the river four or five miles from here, over on the

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Illinois side, just on top of the hills. Used to be quite a village, years ago, but it's only a store and post-office now. Why, I can take you right there, pardner. And there's a creek there, too, crosses the road. Only —

“Greenland ain't any 23 miles back from the slough, or from the river, either. It's only — say!”

The boys heard him slap his knee.

“Why, shucks!” he exclaimed. “That ain't 23 miles. That's meant for two-three miles. Two *or* three miles. And that's about what this Greenland store is back from the river.”

He let his voice fall into a mysterious whisper.

“Why, pardner,” he whispered, “this is as easy as falling off a log! We can walk right to the spot. And that arrow don't point to no treasure, either. That arrow is like any other arrow on a map — it points north. It was put there to show where north is.”

“But that would make the Mississippi River flow from east to west,” objected the Tough Customer.

“And that's why I say so!” declared the Rat. “Because it does flow right spang from east to west, all the way from Derlingport to Riverbank — thirty good miles! If that map showed a river flowing from north to south, it would be wrong, because the Mississippi don't flow that way at Greenland store. You bet! All we've got to do is to go right to the bank of the creek where that cross-mark is, and if that treasure is there, we'll find her!”

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“So you’ll put off cider-hunting awhile, I guess,” said the Tough Customer. “Gimme the map; I’ll put it back where I keep it.”

He shuffled around inside the boat, putting the map back.

“Well, now,” the Rat said, “as to putting off hunting that cider, it seems to me, seeing we’re right here on the island, we might take a day or two and —”

What he would have said next nobody ever knew, for here came Orph Cadwallader and Wampus’s Uncle Oscar and Rover and I, and Orph had his gun and an axe, and Uncle Oscar had his pistol and an axe, and they were mad! They were mighty mad! Orph handed me his gun and up with his axe and chopped the shore line of the shanty-boat, and swung the axe and brought it down whang against the end of the boat. You should have seen the boards fly! In three blows Orph had the whole end of that shanty-boat knocked to splinters, and the Tough Customer and the Rat were out into the water, shouting and swearing and pulling the boat through the willows into the slough, to try to save some of it, anyway, and Orph stooped and picked up slabs of wet driftwood and slammed them at the two.

When the shanty-boat was out past the willow fringe, the Tough Customer swung aboard and grabbed his pole and began poling for dear life, shouting, “Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!” and then

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Orph slung one last slab at them and missed by ten feet, and about all that was left of the excitement was Rover, trying to bark his head off.

“That’s the end of *them!*” Orph said. “That’ll be the last we ever see of those two.”

He took his gun and he and Uncle Oscar started down toward the end of the island to watch the shanty-boat float by, and we all started down there with them. But when Jibby had gone a few yards, he stopped short. Then he turned back and worked his way through the willows to where the shanty-boat had been. He picked up a broken board and bent over the water and fished something white out from among the splinters of houseboat.

“What is it?” I asked, and he opened it and showed me.

It was the map of the pirate’s treasure place.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RED-HEADED BANDIT

WELL, as soon as Jibby Jones got the map, we went down to the lower end of the island, and we saw the Tough Customer's shanty-boat floating out of the slough and on down the river, and then we went back.

Orpheus Cadwallader and Wampus's Uncle Oscar went back to the cottages, and we boys began looking for dead fish where we had left off, and as we looked we talked about the Tough Customer and the Rat and the land pirate's treasure. We did not study the map then, because it was soaking wet. Jibby Jones pinned it inside his hat, so it could dry out there.

As we went along, Skippy and Tad and Wampus told me what they had heard the Tough Customer say to the Rat, and what they had heard the Rat say to the Tough Customer, and when they had told it all, Wampus said to me:

"George, I'll bet the man the Tough Customer stole the map from was the Red-Headed Bandit that tried to steal Rover last year. Because, listen — the Red-Headed Bandit had a scar over his eye, didn't he?"

"You bet he did!" I said. And all of a sudden I had a scared feeling, as if there was danger and mys-

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tery all around me and I knew it, but couldn't see where or what it was exactly. You get the same feeling, sometimes, when you are walking through a big patch of weeds, taller than your head, and all of a sudden you hear a queer noise to the left of you, and a queer noise to the right of you, and then a cobweb strikes you across the face and sticks there, and you hear another queer noise behind you. That's how I felt now — as if there was queerness and mystery all around our island. Because here was the Red-Headed Bandit in this pirate's treasure business, and I had never thought of the Red-Headed Bandit as anything much.

The business of the Red-Headed Bandit was like this: A year ago, the year before Jibby Jones came to our island, my sister May was going to be married to Mr. Edwin Skreever, of Derlingport, Iowa, on September 11th, in the evening. They were going to be married at our house down in town — in Riverbank — and from the way May and mother talked about it you would think it was going to be grand and lovely and everything. So May said to mother:

“Well, I suppose George and Wampus will have to be at the wedding, but I tremble to think of it. I know they will do some awful thing and spoil everything, but I suppose they will have to be there.”

May knew mighty well I wouldn't go to her wedding or to anybody's wedding unless Wampus went, too. We always go together.

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“We’ll just have to hope for the best,” mother said.

“Well, there is one thing certain,” May said, “I’m not going to have those two boys down there until the last possible moment. When we go down to make the preparations, I want them left up here on the island where they will be out of mischief.”

That suited me, all right! I didn’t want to go down and have May nagging at me with her “Do keep your hands off that, George!” and “Please don’t touch that, George!”

We had been up there on Birch Island all summer — our family and Wampus Smale’s family and a dozen other families — living in the cottages on stilts and having a good time on the island and on the good old Mississippi. So, about the 1st of September, most of the families went back down to town, but our family and the Smales did not. They waited a few days longer.

Just about then — about the 1st of September — Mr. Edwin Skreever came down from Derlingport in his motor-boat to visit with us until the wedding. I don’t say I liked him much; neither did Wampus. Maybe he was all right, but he was no fun. He thought he was wonderful, I guess, and May thought so, but he was too haughty to suit me. I guess he didn’t like boys much and he thought he had to be severe and solemn with them. He acted as if he thought he might die if the creases got out of his trousers. He had no use for my dog, either. He was

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always saying: "Down! Lie down! Get down! Get out!" to Rover. He did not like him.

You see, Rover is a pretty big dog and affectionate. He would rush up to Mr. Edwin Skreever and jump up on him and try to kiss him on the face. Sometimes he would get one paw on Mr. Edwin Skreever's necktie and one paw on his collar, and sometimes he would get one paw on Mr. Edwin Skreever's vest and the other sort of tangled in his watch-chain. Then Mr. Edwin Skreever would whack at him and say: "Get down you beast!" But not when May was handy.

Rover was my dog, because May had given him to me, but he was May's dog, too, because Mr. Jack Betts had given him to May. I never knew when Rover was my dog and when he was May's dog, because girls are mostly Indian givers. When she wanted to pet Rover and take him walking, he was May's dog — so she claimed — but when Rover howled or needed to be fed, May would say: "For goodness' sake, George, attend to that dog of yours!"

I guess one reason Mr. Edwin Skreever did not care much for Rover was because Mr. Jack Betts had given him to May. I guess Mr. Edwin Skreever was jealous, because when Mr. Jack Betts gave Rover to May everybody thought Mr. Jack Betts was the one she was going to be married to.

Well, no matter! I only want to tell you the awful fix Wampus and I got into on account of being left

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up there on the island where we would be out of mischief.

On the 9th of September Parcell came up in his big motor-launch and took May and mother and the Smales all down to town to get ready for May's wedding. So they left Mr. Edwin Skreever on the island with me and Wampus, because we could go down in Mr. Edwin Skreever's motor-boat on the 11th, which was the wedding day. I guess they were almost as glad to have Mr. Edwin Skreever out of the way as they were to have me and Wampus out of the way.

That left nobody on the island but us three and Orpheus Cadwallader, who is the caretaker and stays on the island all winter. He was to close up our cottage when we left.

So that was all right. The last thing May said before she got aboard Parcell's launch was:

"Now, George, you be sure you don't let Rover wander off somewhere so you can't bring him down when you come. You had better tie him up."

I've told you about Rover, and how he would wander for miles around the island, and even swim across to Oak Island and wander there, hunting a dead fish to perfume himself with.

The only way to keep him from wandering after dead fish was to tie him up, and then he howled all night. That was his second bad habit, and it was almost worse than dead fish. He was the loudest and saddest howler I ever heard. When you tied him up,

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he would sit down on his haunches and put his nose up and open his mouth and just let loose all the agony of all the dogs that ever suffered pain or sorrow from the days of Adam right on to to-day. And loudly, too. When Rover really got interested in howling, you could hear him five miles.

The only thing in Riverbank or anywhere near it that made as much noise as Rover's howl was Mr. Jack Betts's motor-boat. His motor-boat was a speed boat and was called the Skittery III, because Mr. Jack Betts had run the Skittery I and the Skittery II onto snags and mashed them to splinters. I guess that was one reason why May did not want to marry Mr. Jack Betts — she was afraid he would mash himself to splinters some day. A husband that is mashed to splinters is not much use around the house.

Mr. Edwin Skreever used to say:

“That's Jack Betts all over! He uses a barrel of gasoline every time he takes out that boat of his — fourteen dollars to risk his life for ten miles of idiotic speed, and he hasn't a dollar in the bank! Twenty-seven years old and not a dollar to his name!”

Even father would not ride in the Skittery III. It was a much faster boat than the others and could make thirty-five miles an hour upstream on our old Mississippi, and that is some speed! When it was going full tilt the Skittery III stood up on about three inches of the stern end of its keel and simply skittered on the water, and all twelve cylinders

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screamed. It made more noise than forty airplanes. It made more noise than ten planing mills. I never knew anything that made such a noise.

And go? Mr. Jack Betts and his chauffeur had to wear leather helmets to keep the wind from blowing the hair right off their heads. Father said that if the boat ever took a nose dive it would ram itself so deep into the bottom of the water that Jack Betts would have to go around to China and pull it the rest of the way through — only there wouldn't be any Jack Betts to go to China.

Well, about four o'clock on September 10th we heard a noise down the river that sounded like forty-seven sawmills and we knew Mr. Jack Betts was starting the Skittery III. Town is four miles down river and in about a minute the Skittery III came roaring up into our chute and Mr. Jack Betts shut off the power and taxied in to the shore of our island. He had a note for Mr. Edwin Skreever, and it was from May. Mr. Jack Betts stood around and asked if there was any answer. Mr. Edwin Skreever said there was not — that May only wanted him to go down a little earlier the next day than she had told him before. He was rather stiff about it, and Mr. Jack Betts was just as stiff, and after a minute or two Mr. Jack Betts went down and got into the Skittery III and skittered back to town.

Wampus and I sat on the rocks of the ripraps in front of our cottage and watched the Skittery III skitter. Old Rover was there, piling all over us, and

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we kept pushing him away and telling him to sit down. Every now and then he would tangle us in the rope that was tied to his collar.

"You had better tie up that dog," Mr. Edwin Skreever said. "If he wanders off to-night, you may not have him to-morrow."

Now, just notice how things happen in this world sometimes. Mr. Edwin Skreever was on the porch of our cottage, behind the wire screens where the mosquitoes could not get at him, and he was not very quiet. I guess he was thinking of how he would have to be married the next day. Anyway, he was walking up and down the porch, putting his hands into his pockets and taking them out again. Every minute or so he would say something to us, as a man does when he is nervous. First he would tell us to tie up the dog, then he would say he hoped the dog did wander away, and that he would be glad if he never saw the dog again.

"And just you let me tell you one thing!" he said. "I'm not going to have that dog jumping all over me at my wedding. I'm not going to have that dog clawing all over me and clawing all over May and making a general nuisance of himself. And I won't have him tied up and howling. I'm not going to let that dog spoil my wedding. You understand that!"

I just said "Aw!" and went on talking with Wampus and wrestling with Rover. So, in a little while, the Bright Star came along down the river with a couple of Government barges loaded with willows.

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There are not many boats on the river now, so Wampus and I looked at the Bright Star as she went by, and when she reached the lower end of our island she veered in and laid the two barges alongside the ripraps. The men ran a couple of cables ashore and made the two barges fast by hitching the cables to a couple of trees and then the Bright Star sheered off and crossed the chute and went out of sight behind Buffalo Island, across the chute. It was no fun sitting where we were listening to Mr. Edwin Skreever scold, so Wampus and I got up and went down the path to take a look at the two barges.

They were like plenty of other Government barges we had seen. These two had their numbers painted on them — "U.S. 420" and "U.S. 426" — and they were seventeen feet wide and eighty-two feet long. Wampus and I had been in and over those very two barges more than once. We knew just how they were made and all about them.

The two barges, as they lay along the shore there, were piled high with cut willows. The Government men cut the willows where they grow at the lower ends of islands and take them on the barges to places where they are repairing dams or ripraps. They throw the willows on the dams, butt end upstream, and dump rocks on them. Ripraps along the banks are made that same way. It is not often you see two barges alone; the steamer usually tows four or six at a time. All these barges are decked over. The decks are made of four-inch planks, and at each end of this

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flooring are two hatches, with lids. When nobody is around to order a fellow off the barges, he can pull up these hatch covers and get inside the barges.

The inside of one of those barges is not much of a place to be in. When you go down through the hatch, you see that the inside is damp, with maybe three or four inches of water in it, and a smell of tar or oakum. It is about five feet from the bottom boards to the floorboards, so a fellow can stand up there, but he can't run much because there are criss-cross braces. Neither is the inside of a barge one big room. Two great, thick bulkheads, or wooden walls, run lengthwise of the barge and cut it into three narrow halls — as you might call them — eighty feet long and about five feet wide.

These two barges were pretty well loaded with willows. One of them was loaded from the tip of its bow to the end of its stern — willows piled ten or twelve feet high. The other, the "U.S. 420," was almost as well loaded, but not quite.

So Wampus and I stood looking at the barges and we thought maybe we would climb aboard and climb on the willows and have some fun, but, when we were going to, a man we hadn't seen sat up and looked at us. He had red hair and a scar over one eye. And that was the first we saw of the Red-Headed Bandit.

CHAPTER IX

THE ABDUCTION OF ROVER

THE Red-Headed Bandit had been lying on top of the willows, and when he sat up so sudden he gave us a scare. We did not like the looks of him.

"Hello!" he said, and he looked us over. Then he said, "Where did you get that dog?"

"Raised him from a pup," I said.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Don't try to tell me anything like that, young feller. That's my dog. A feller stole that dog from me."

Well, I began to back away. I reached down and got hold of the rope that was fastened to Rover's collar.

"He did not!" I said. "Mr. Jack Betts gave my sister this dog when he was a pup."

"Well, don't get mad!" the man said. "It might be I am mistaken. What will you take for the dog? I'll give you a quarter for him."

"He ain't for sale," I said.

"I'll give you half a dollar."

"No, he ain't for sale."

"Give you a dollar for him," said the man, but I didn't wait to have any more talk with him. I started back for our cottage.

Mr. Edwin Skreever was still walking up and down the porch and I sat down on the rocks. Wam-

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pus stood a minute or so, and then he reached into his pocket and took out a nail. He had a pocket half full of old, rusty nails he had knocked out of old driftwood — old iron nails, all sizes.

“Look here, Mr. Skreever,” he said, “can you do this?”

He took the nail, flat, between his thumb and two first fingers and threw it as hard as he could out over the river, making it spin, and it sang as it went. Whine is a better word; it whined like a guitar string when you pick it and then run your thumb up it.

“Did you ever hear anybody make a nail sing like that?” Wampus asked.

“Yes,” said Mr. Edwin Skreever, “I have. I have heard that before. And I cannot imagine why it is a boy delights in throwing away perfectly good nails for the mere satisfaction of hearing them make a useless noise. You may wish, some day, that you had not thrown away that nail.”

“Aw!” Wampus said.

“It is a useless and uncalled-for waste,” said Mr. Edwin Skreever. “Nails cost money. Nails cost labor and time. A miner must dig the iron ore, and another miner must dig coal, and laborers must turn the ore into iron and fashion the nails from the iron. Salesmen must go out and sell the nails, railroads must carry them, other salesmen must sell them again. And you throw them into the river! Why? What good does it do you?”

Wampus just said “Aw!” again, because he did

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not know what else to say, and I thought I was gladder than ever that I wasn't going to marry Mr. Edwin Skreever. I was glad he was going to live in Derlingport and not in Riverbank. I don't like fellows that lecture you when you throw away an old rusty nail. So I said to Wampus:

"Let's eat a muskmelon."

Well, all summer we had had a pile of muskmelons and watermelons under the cottage. They're cheap and whenever we wanted to eat one we did. We used to get them by the skiffload. We would sit on the ripraps and eat and throw the rinds into the river, and the yellow-jacket hornets would come by the hundreds and pile all over any rinds that did not fall in the river. They would crowd onto any juice that fell on the rocks, and they would light on the very piece you were eating. There were lots of yellow-jackets, but nobody minded them. If they got in the way we flicked them off with a finger.

But there is one queer thing about yellow-jackets. They will buzz around and fly around all summer and never sting you unless, perhaps, you step on one with your bare foot, but there comes a day sooner or later when every yellow-jacket everywhere gets hopping mad. All the yellow-jackets for miles around go crazy on the same day. Maybe they all go crazy at the same hour of the same day — or the same minute — I don't know. Anyway, this was the day. September 10th was the day the yellow-jackets quit being calm and gentle that year and began to be

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angry and go around with chips on their shoulders looking for a fight. So the first yellow-jacket Wampus flicked off him swore a blue streak in yellow-jacket language and buzzed in a circle to get up speed and banged right into Wampus's neck. Zingo!

Wampus made one jump and grabbed his cap and slashed at the air and in a minute a dozen yellow-jackets were on the war-path. The next one to sting went at Rover's nose like a shot out of a rifle. We heard poor Rover give one wild "Yeowp!" and he jumped about six feet in the air and when he came down he was already running. He went out of sight down the path, making about twenty feet at each jump and "yeowping" at the top of his voice, and his "yeowps" grew fainter and fainter. Mr. Edwin Skreever laughed, but I stood still, just holding my hat ready to swat any yellow-jacket that came too near me.

"Come on!" I said to Wampus, "let's get away from here. It's stinging time."

So we gathered up the rest of our muskmelons and got away from there as quietly as we could. We went up to his cottage, which was all boarded up, and sat on the step.

Well, about six o'clock Orpheus Cadwallader came down from his shack to get our supper for us. He brought a spring chicken and fried it and we had a good supper, and then Wampus and I went out front. We fooled around awhile and Mr. Edwin Skreever lighted the lamp and wrote some letters or

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his will or something. It was none of our business what he wrote. Orpheus Cadwallader washed the dishes and then came out and said he was going to row down to town, and he went off in his skiff.

Then, presently, Wampus said:

"Where's Rover?"

"Gosh!" I said, "I bet he's wandering!"

"We'd better find him," Wampus said, and I knew that was so.

I thought I knew where he would be, over back by the slough where there were some dogfish on the shore that would never swim again.

Mr. Edwin Skreever came out on the porch.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Rover ran away," I said. "We've got to find him."

"Oh, drat you and your Rover!" he said. "Didn't May tell you not to let that dog run away? You certainly do aggravate me! For two cents I would go down to town now and be quit of your foolishness."

I did not say anything but Wampus did.

"Why don't you go, then?" he asked. "We wouldn't care."

So we went to find Rover. We worked back to the slough, calling him all the while — "Here, Rover! Here, Rover! Here, Rover!" — but not a yip nor bark from him. We went up the slough and down the slough calling him, and it began to get dark. Then, suddenly, Wampus stopped short.

"Say!" he said.

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“What?”

“I know! That fellow got him — that red-headed fellow on the barge!”

“I bet he did!” I said.

Well, it seemed likely that that was what had happened. So Wampus and I stood there in the dark a minute.

“Well, we’ve got to get him,” I said. “I’m not going to have anybody steal my dog. Come on!”

We worked through the weeds and bushes, across toward the chute and down toward the two willow barges. We came out not far from them as we saw the red light the man had put on the barges as a signal. Then we crept along Indian fashion, bent over, toward the barges.

“He would put him inside,” Wampus said, and I knew that as well as Wampus did. That was what any dog-thief would do — put Rover down inside the barge and close the hatch cover. We crept close to the barges. I picked up a good-sized stone and so did Wampus.

Well, just as we got close up to the “U.S. 420” we heard Rover. We heard just one bark and then we saw a man lifting the hatch cover. The man slid down inside the barge and eased the cover back into place over his head, and then we heard no more barking. The cover was thick and heavy and I guess he wanted to shut in Rover’s barks while he was tying him fast.

“Come on!” I said, and the next minute I was on

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the barge and Wampus after me. Then I did not know what to do. We couldn't yank up that cover and go down and take Rover away from the man, because he might kill us or something. But Wampus knew what to do.

"Here!" he said, and he tossed me a handful of his rusty nails. "Hurry up! Get busy! Nail this cover down!"

So we did. We used the two rocks as hammers and drove in the nails, and then we jumped for shore and ran, because we were frightened. We ran up the path and we did not stop until we were almost at our cottage.

"Gee!" I said then. "We did it! We've got him! But what are we going to do about it?"

"Do?" said Wampus. "We'll get Mr. Edwin Skreever and Orpheus Cadwallader and have Orpheus take his shotgun, and we'll have them pry off that cover and get your dog. That's what we'll do."

"But Orpheus has gone to town."

"Well, we'll do it in the morning."

That would have been all right, too, but just then the Bright Star came around the lower end of Buffalo Island and steered for the two barges. I went cold, I tell you! The only thing I could think of doing was to get Mr. Edwin Skreever, so we ran to our cottage and called and shouted, but he was not there. We guessed he had gone down to town as he had threatened to do, maybe, so we ran down the

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path to the barges. The men were already throwing off the cables. They were pretty cross, too, because they don't like to work at night, and they wouldn't listen to us. They told us to get away from there and they chased us. We had to stand and see the Bright Star tow the barges out into the river and away. We watched them until they were just dim red and green lights far down the river. Then we went back to the cottage.

We were scared, I tell you! We thought maybe that man would stay nailed down inside that barge until he starved to death and some day his bones would be found and we would be arrested and, maybe, hung. And then, as if that wasn't bad enough, we saw Mr. Edwin Skreever's motor-boat tied in front of the cottage! He hadn't gone down to town. Then we were scared! Ten times over!

We sat in the cabin until it was awful late, hoping Mr. Edwin Skreever was only out somewhere hunting Rover, but he did not come. We couldn't fool ourselves. We knew we had nailed May's bridegroom inside that barge and sent him down the river — nobody could tell how far, perhaps all the way to New Orleans! And the wedding was the next day!

Well, it was terrible! We tried to think that we had not done anything wrong — that we had only tried to keep our dog from being stolen — but it was no comfort. About midnight we heard the creak of Orpheus Cadwallader's oars as he rowed home from

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town, but that did not comfort us much, either. We went to sleep right there in the living-room of the cottage, thinking what would happen to us the next day when the wedding-time came and there was no Mr. Edwin Skreever. I dreamed awful things all night, but the worst was a dream about May. She was all dressed up in her wedding clothes, with a white veil and flowers, and when it came time to be married, Mr. Edwin Skreever was not there, so she wept and wept. Mother and father were very stern and cross, and mother said, "Well, there is no help for it; you will have to marry Rover!" so they dragged Rover in, yowling and pulling back, and father and Mr. Smale held him up on his hind legs and then, all of a sudden, Rover gave a big wiggle and turned into a pile of rusty nails. Then May wept again, and in came Mr. Edwin Skreever, but he was nothing but bones — just plain skeleton bones. He pointed his bone finger at me and opened his bone face and I thought he was going to speak, but he didn't. He let out a noise like Mr. Jack Betts's Skittery III.

That woke me up and, sure enough, I was hearing the noise of the Skittery III. It wakened Wampus, too, and we went to the door, rubbing our eyes. The Skittery III swung in toward our cottage and Mr. Jack Betts shut off her power and taxied in. He jumped ashore and climbed up the rocks.

"Hello, young fellows!" he said. "May and your folks sent me up; they've changed their minds —

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want you and Skreever to come down right away and not wait until noon."

"Well — " I said. "Well; all right."

"What's all the welling about, son?" Mr. Jack Betts asked.

"Well, I don't know," I said. "I guess there isn't going to be any wedding. I guess maybe Mr. Edwin Skreever won't be there."

"He isn't here," said Wampus.

Then I thought of something.

"Unless you would be the bridegroom," I said to Mr. Jack Betts. "I guess May wouldn't like to get all ready for a wedding and not have one. I guess, when she's got her dress and the house all decorated and everything — "

"My word!" said Mr. Jack Betts, laughing. "What are you trying to do? Are you asking me to marry your sister?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

"As a substitute? My word!"

"Well — well — " I said, and then he laughed again.

"What's all this about Ed Skreever not being here and not being there and not being anywhere?" he asked.

So I told him and Wampus told him. We both told him at the same time. We told him how we had nailed Mr. Edwin Skreever into the hold of the barge "U.S. 420" and sent him down the river. We said we were sorry, but maybe the Bright Star

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would tow him all the way to New Orleans before he could get out. We told him the whole thing.

“My word!” he cried, when he could stop laughing. “My word! I wouldn’t have missed this for a million dollars; no, not for two million! For eight million dollars I would let the stuck-up fellow stay in the barge. I would for ten million dollars, anyway. But, no! I like May too much. We can’t have May ‘waiting at the church.’ ”

“It isn’t going to be at the church,” I said. “It is going to be at our house.”

Mr. Jack Betts looked at me then.

“George,” he said, “you are wonderful! You are just wonderful — no other word for it! Come on, you two boys; we’ll go get that interned bridegroom.”

Well, that was the only time I ever rode in the Skittery III, and I don’t know whether I want to ride in her again or not. I was scared every inch of the way — every single inch. It was like being shot out of a gun or something. Mr. Jack Betts certainly could make the Skittery III go! We skittered down the river and were past the town before I caught my breath and we were miles below town before I could breathe my breath after I caught it, and then there was the Bright Star lazying along twelve miles below town and Mr. Jack Betts shut off his gas and slid up alongside and told the captain what he had come for. The captain shouted to the pilot and he jingled a bell

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and the Bright Star backed water and half a dozen hands ran forward over the willows and pried off the hatch cover and out came Rover and Mr. Edwin Skreever.

"A nice business!" Mr. Edwin Skreever said bitterly. "A fine hole to be in! I'll smell of tar all the rest of my days. But you young rascals will suffer for this — I promise you that!"

We thought we would, too.

"Oh, no, now, Edwin!" Mr. Jack Betts said. "Come, now! That's no way to talk on your merry wedding morn. These boys meant no harm. Just forget it!"

"I'll not!" Mr. Edwin Skreever said, even more bitterly.

"Well, of course," said Mr. Jack Betts cheerfully, "I appreciate your feelings, but this boat of mine — this Skittery III — is such a peculiar boat. She won't carry any but forgetful people. I did hope you were forgetful, Edwin, so I could take you aboard and skitter you back to town in a couple of minutes. But if you really want to stay on this barge — "

For a minute Mr. Edwin Skreever scowled at us all, and then he grinned.

"All right! I've forgotten," he said.

We made a pretty heavy load for the Skittery III, but she skittered up past the town and up to Birch Island in no time at all. Then Mr. Edwin Skreever packed his things and Mr. Jack Betts skittered away and Mr. Edwin Skreever and Wampus and I went

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down to town in the motor-boat. Rover rode on the stern seat.

When we went up to our house, May was standing at the gate looking for us. She waved her hand as soon as she saw us, and when we reached the gate she took Mr. Edwin Skreever's hand and said some soft stuff to him, and then she said:

"And you didn't forget Rover, did you, Edwin?"

"No," he said, "I didn't forget him. And I don't believe I ever will."

But you can see why I felt scared when it seemed likely that the red-headed man with the scar over his eye in the Arkansas jail was the Red-Headed Bandit. Because we knew the Red-Headed Bandit was a mighty hard character. Of course, when you come to think of it, he did not steal Rover, but he might have stolen him if he had thought of it and had wanted a dog like Rover.

CHAPTER X

THE TREASURE HUNT

THE night after we had chased the Tough Customer and the Rat from Birch Island we had a meeting of the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company in the shaft-house of the Five Friends' Worm Mine. The Worm Mine was something we had started a few days earlier.

Everybody knows it is hardly worth while going fishing unless you have worms or minnows for bait. Minnows are the best bait, but they are hard to get and harder to keep, so nearly everybody uses worms. When everything is moist, you can dig worms almost anywhere on the island, but, when a dry spell comes on, the ground gets drier and drier, and the worms go down so deep that you can dig for an hour out back of the cottages and not get a worm. Then there is only one place on the island where you can get worms. That is in what we all called Mosquito Hollow. This year the worms went deep, and we had to try Mosquito Hollow for them.

Jibby was with us when we said we guessed we would have to try Mosquito Hollow for worms, and the minute we said it he sat down on a log of driftwood and closed his eyes and laid his finger alongside of his nose.

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"What are you doing that for?" Wampus Smale asked him.

"For worms," Jibby said.

"Trying to smell where they are?" Wampus asked, laughing at him.

"Maybe so," Jibby Jones said. "I want to do my share when it comes to getting worms, and you know I can't go to Mosquito Hollow. I wonder —"

"Why can't you go to Mosquito Hollow?" Wampus asked.

"I might stand it if it wasn't for my spectacles," Jibby said. "The mosquitoes get in behind my spectacles and I can't smack them. And then I swell up."

This was true. Jibby always wore tortoise-shell rim spectacles, and he did swell up when a mosquito bit him.

"I'm ashamed to swell so much," Jibby said, "but I can't help it. I think perhaps my grandchildren won't, if I ever have any grandchildren, because the swelling seems to be going out of our family. When I get a mosquito bite, it only swells as big as a walnut, but father's and mother's bites swell almost as big as apples, and my grandfather used to swell as big as a wash-basin. I don't know how big a mosquito bite would have swelled on great-grandfather. But I wonder —"

"What do you wonder?" Wampus asked.

"I was just wondering if you could charm a worm by playing it a tune on a flute, the way people charm

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snakes," Jibby said. "If we could, we might get a flute and charm some worms until they crawled out of their holes, no matter how deep the dry weather has sent them. But I never heard of charming worms with a flute."

We laughed, but Jibby Jones was entirely serious. If he had ever heard, or read, of worms being charmed, he would have tried it because that was the way he was. But he hadn't.

"No," he said, "I don't believe it would work. If it would work, Izaak Walton would have written it in his fishing book. I'll have to think of some other way."

"No, don't you bother," Tad said. "We'll get the worms."

So then we all said the same thing, because we knew how Jibby swelled up when mosquitoes bit him. Some folks do and some folks don't, but Jibby does. And Mosquito Hollow is just about the worst mosquito place in the world.

The skeets are bad enough anywhere on Birch Island, because there are billions of them that come over from the ponds and sloughs, but in Mosquito Hollow it is as if all the mosquitoes in the world had gathered together in one place. A hundred skeets will get on your hand in a second and all start to bite at once.

Mosquito Hollow is the lowest ground on Birch Island and the dampest, and that is why there are always worms there, but it is why there are always

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skeets there, too. It is down near the end of the island, below all the real cottages. There is one old shack there, about as big as a playhouse, but nobody has lived in it for years — too many skeets, I guess. All around the hollow, and in it, the nettles grow as high as a man's head and keep out the breeze, and the skeets just make it the metropolis of the whole skeet world. There are not so many in early spring, but by summer there are trillions of quadrillions, and the noise they make sounds like a sawmill.

"Don't you bother, Jibby," I said. "We'll get worms for all of us."

So Jibby went with us down the path along the river, but, when we got down near the old shack, he sat down on an elm root to think how to get worms without getting mosquito-bit, and the rest of us went back in through the nettles to get the worms. It was only a few yards, but the minute we got to the low ground the skeets were at us. All of us began slapping our necks and faces and hands and arms and whacking at our backs and ankles and legs, and jumping around and waving our arms.

We had our spades and tin cans and Wampus rammed the blade of his spade into the ground and then yelled and began slapping himself everywhere. Tad grabbed the handle of the spade and pushed down on it and turned up a chunk of soil, and then he began yelling and slapping himself. I kicked the clod of dirt with my foot and picked up one fat worm

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and put it in the can, and then I yelled and began to slap myself. And Skippy did not even pick up a single worm; he just yelled and slapped and then ran for the riverbank full tilt, dragging his spade after him, and we all followed him. It was no use; the skeets were too fierce, we couldn't stand them.

Jibby Jones was sitting just where we left him, and we began scratching our ankles and rubbing our necks and faces and the backs of our hands, and saying, "Gee!" and "Whew!" and "Oh, boy!" on account of the bites.

"I've been waiting for you to come back," Jibby Jones said.

"Well, we came back," I said. "I guess we didn't stay long enough for you to get homesick for us, did we?"

"I didn't notice," Jibby said. "I've been thinking. I think a person ought to think when he hasn't anything else to do. I was thinking about fishworms, and I thought it wasn't fair for you fellows to do all the work and get all the worms when I am going to use some of them."

"Hah!" Wampus said. "I guess there aren't going to be any worms. I wouldn't go back to that hollow for a million dollars."

"Mosquitoes?" asked Jibby. "And, of course they are worse for me."

"Because you swell up when they bite you," said Tad.

"Not only that, but there is more of me to bite,"

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said Jibby. "I got more exposed surface than you fellows. More face."

That did not seem so, but he proved it was so.

"On account of my nose," he said. "Wampus has hardly any nose — it is just a nubbin — but my nose is like the jib sail of a boat. It is like a big triangle sticking out from my face. If you measure across Wampus's face, you've got all the surface mosquitoes can get at, because his nose doesn't amount to much, but, when you measure across my face and come to the nose, you've got to measure my nose, too. You've got to measure the base and altitude and hypotenuse of my nose on one side, and then measure the base and altitude and hypotenuse of the other side of my nose, and it amounts to a lot. The mosquitoes have a whole lot more nose to bite on me than on any of the rest of you."

We saw that was true and we said so.

"So I thought I had better think of a way to get all the fishworms we need without getting mosquito-bit," said Jibby, "and I did."

"How?" I asked him.

"Well," said Jibby, "the best way is to have a worm mine and mine for them."

"Mine for them!" Skippy yelled, laughing. "You go back into that hollow and try to mine! I dare you!"

"I wouldn't want to do that," Jibby said, as solemn as an owl. "I didn't think of doing that. I thought of mining in the old shack over yonder. It

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has a dirt floor and it has screens over the windows and at the door. I thought we could go into the shack and close the screen door and sink a shaft there, and then tunnel out under Mosquito Hollow and get the worms. I don't suppose a worm cares whether you dig down to get him or tunnel up under him to get him. I never heard so."

Well, of course, Jibby was joking about whether worms cared how we got them, but as soon as he mentioned a worm mine, we all wondered why we had never thought of one. When you come to think of it, a worm mine is the only sensible way to get worms from a place where the mosquitoes practically eat you alive. You are down under the ground where the skeets can't get at you, and you are down where the biggest and best worms are, and you have your mine, and any time you need fishworms you can go into the mine and dig a little worm-ore and get the worms out of it.

Almost before Jibby was through talking, we were making a rush for the old shack. The screens were fair to middling at the door and windows — good enough, anyway, even if they were rusty — and in a minute Tad had marked out the size of the shaft we ought to sink. He scratched it on the hard earth of the floor with his spade. But Jibby wasn't there with us. We were so excited that we did not notice, at first, that he was not with us, but about the time when we began to try to dig the hard earth of that floor he came in bringing a regular ditch-digger's

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pick. It was just what we needed. Jibby always did think of everything.

Well, the worm mine was a big success. We took turns digging the shaft, some of us digging and some of us looking for worms in the dirt we dug out and some of us carrying the dirt out of the shack and dumping it. The dirt we got out of the shaft was pay-dirt, but it did not assay very heavy in worms; it was low-grade ore and the worms ran small to middling.

We talked a good deal while we worked, and we decided to call the mine the Five Friends' Worm Mine. We got so interested in mining worms and in making it a first-class mine that we forgot all about fishing. It was bully to think that we were probably the first worm miners the world ever knew, and that this was the only worm mine in the world. So, from then on, whenever we wanted worms, we went down to the shack and mined some. And that was what the Five Friends' Worm Mine was, and that old shack was the "shaft-house" where we met to talk over the plans of the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company.

We began planning while it was daylight, but before we were through we had lighted our lanterns.

First of all, Jibby unpinned the map from inside his hat and spread it out on the bottom of an old tin bucket. If the paper wasn't old, it looked old, and was stained and yellow. The whole map wasn't much bigger than my hand. First, we looked at the

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back of it, and there was the word "Riverbank" written as plain as could be. Then Jibby turned the map over. We all leaned over and looked at it.

The map was exactly as the Tough Customer had explained it to the Rat. There was the river marked "river," and the slough, and the creek emptying into the slough, and the crossroads, and the house, and the "X" where the treasure was probably buried, and the arrow pointing north. There was the "2-3 miles" and the "Greenland."

"That's it, all right!" Wampus said. "That's just about the way the creek comes into Greenland Slough, and just about the way Greenland Slough comes into the river. And look where the 'X' is. A straight line across the back of the square that stands for the house would go right spang to that 'X.' That's where the treasure is, sure! Unless it is where the head of the arrow points, where the creek crosses the road."

Jibby drew a deep, solemn breath, if you can call a breath solemn. He looked at us with something like awe in his eyes.

"Boys," he said, "this is the real map! Whoever drew it, and whatever it was drawn for, this is a real land pirate map. Because that's not an arrow. That's a pine tree — a signal pine tree; that's a John A. M'rell signal pine!"

As soon as Jibby said it, we all wondered why we hadn't known it from the first minute. It looked like a pine tree, once anybody said so, and it was in the

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corner of the lot, where all the John A. Murrell signal pines were.

We were all excited, and we wished it was the next day, so we could get to hunting the treasure, but Jibby Jones just stared at the map and turned it one way and another. By and by he said:

"Have any of you ever been up there at Greenland?"

We all had, and we told him so. He asked what the store and post-office were like, and we told him the store was the post-office, and that it was an old frame building, painted white, with a big porch in front and a roof over the porch, and usually some boxes and barrels on the porch. Close back of the store was a shed, open toward the store, where some lumber, and lime in barrels, and cement in bags, and drain tile, and bales of hay, and barrels of salt, and so on, were stored. And alongside of the shed was a big red barn, with old wagons and empty boxes and barrels and the usual store litter scattered in the yard the three buildings made.

"The shed and the barn don't show on the map," Jibby said.

"No. Maybe they were built later, after the map was made," Skippy said, and Jibby thought that might be so.

"I've been thinking how we want to go at this job," he said. "It seems to me we want to go up the river in the motor-boat, and up the slough until we come to the mouth of the creek. Then we'll leave the

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motor-boat and tramp up the creek. When we come to where the creek crosses the road that runs down toward the slough, one of us will go up the road, and the others will continue up the creek to about where the 'X' mark is on the map. If I'm the one that goes up the road, I'll stop when I come to the rear end of the Greenland store, so I can sight along the end of it. Then, when you come to about where the 'X' mark is, one of you stand a spade straight up. I'll sight along the rear of the store and motion to the left with my hand if the spade is too far to the right, or to the right if the spade is too far to the left. That way you'll find the exact spot."

That was fine; nobody but Jibby Jones would have thought of it. So we decided we would do it that way.

The next morning we tuned up Wampus's motor-boat and saw that she had gas, and each of us got a lunch, and we started for Greenland Slough bright and early. We had spades and an old pickaxe, and a good stout gunnysack to put the treasure in. The sun was bright and the river just a little choppy with a brisk cool breeze, and it was all fine and exciting and glorious. The boat went along at a good speed, and before long we were running close to the shore on the Illinois side just below the mouth of Greenland Slough.

Jibby took the map out of his hat and looked at it.

"This is all right," he said. "Now we know the

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only thing about this map we didn't know before. Now we know what these criss-cross scribble marks below the mouth of the slough mean. They mean swamp. It's as if whoever made the map had said, 'If you come for the treasure, don't land here, it's swamp.'"

So we swung into the slough and ran up toward the mouth of the creek, and the first thing we saw was smoke. It came from one of the banks of the creek, but the fire it came from was hidden by willows. It wasn't until we reached the creek that we saw a skiff fastened to one bank of the creek, and on the shore close by a fire with a tin pail hung over it, and the Tough Customer and the Rat sitting on a log eating out of a pan.

The minute they saw us, they jumped up, and the Tough Customer grabbed a spade and the Rat grabbed a club. Wampus swung the motor-boat out toward the middle of the slough and we went by and on up the slough.

"What do you know about that!" Skippy said. "They're here already!"

We could hear them crashing through the willows and driftwood as they came running along the bank of the slough, and Wampus put on a little more speed.

"Did you see anything that looked like treasure?" Tad asked.

We hadn't, any of us. But we hadn't noticed much of anything.

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"How far does this slough run before it comes into the river again?" Jibby asked.

We told him three or four miles, and that the motor-boat could get through to the river that way, because this slough was not dammed at the head.

"Speed up, Wampus," Jibby said. "We will get out into the river, and hasten back down below the mouth of the slough, and below the swamp. Can we walk back to the hills below the swamp?"

We all thought so, although we had never tried it, so we ran on up the slough and out into the river, and chugged back to where the swamp below the slough ended. We left the motor-boat there and struck inland.

It was a tough trip. First, we had to climb five or six feet of steep mud bank, and that brought us to a thicket of willows and weeds and trees and grapevines that we had to fight through inch by inch, pushing them aside and climbing over and dodging under. Then this opened onto a blind slough — a slough that closed at both ends when the river fell in the spring — and we had to work down-river a half-mile or so until we came to a place where there was no water and the surface of the mud had dried and cracked into big bent cakes. We crossed there and fought through more thicket and came out into a forest of water-maples and water-elms. The river had been over this in the spring, and there was half a mile or so of stinging nettles, shoulder high, and

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great rifts of driftwood. We couldn't walk in a straight direction more than twenty feet at a time; we had to go around piles of driftwood, or around mud holes, or pools, or places where the ground was like mush. Forty times we went in over the tops of our shoes, but by and by we came to a huge big cornfield that had been planted after the water had fallen. We walked between the rows of corn, and as we went the land got higher and higher until it began to slant up fairly steep, and then the cornfield ended and we were at the foot of the hills.

The hills here rounded upward and were grassy and not very bad walking, and we got to the top. We were just back of a farmhouse, and we edged along the farm fence, up-river toward the Greenland crossroad, and then struck inland until we hit the hilltop road. We walked along that until we came to the Greenland store.

Right away we saw that the map did not exactly jibe with the things we saw. In the first place, the store was not as far back from the crossroad as the map showed it to be; it was so close to the crossroad that you could step off the porch into the road. And there was no signal pine there, because there was no room for one. We sat down by the side of the road to have a look at the map.

Jibby left us there looking at the map while he walked down the crossroad. In a couple of minutes he came back.

"Well," he said, "this isn't a road at all. It is just

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a sort of driveway alongside of this store, and, as soon as it dips down the hill, it ends in a swampy pasture, and beyond the pasture the hill drops so sharply that no road could go down it, and no road ever did go down it. And I'll tell you another thing. Every nail in every board in this store is a wire nail, and there were no wire nails in 1835. This isn't the place. This store has been built since then. We've got to go farther up the hill road."

"Why?" Wampus asked. "Maybe the place is back in the direction we came from."

"No, because the 'X' mark was on the creek, and we haven't crossed the creek yet. We'll go on up the road until we come to the creek."

We were pretty tired, but we went on up the road. We went about half a mile before we came to the creek. It went under the road through a big tile culvert almost the size of a man. But there was no crossroad anywhere near there, and no house, and no sign of a pine tree. There was a barbed-wire fence and a cornfield where the house and the tree should have been.

"No good!" I said.

But Jibby Jones had spread himself flat on the ground alongside the barbed-wire fence, and he hunched along until he was against the lowest wire, almost, and then he held it as high as he could and hunched under. He got up and disappeared in the cornfield, and we sat down and waited. A farmer drove by, and asked us if we were after woodchucks

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when he saw our spades, but he didn't wait for an answer.

And then we heard Jibby Jones, off in the corn-field, calling "Hi-hoo! Hi-hoo!" and we hunched under the barbed wire and hurried through the corn to where he was.

CHAPTER XI

WHERE IS GREENLAND?

THERE was no doubt in our minds what Jibby Jones had found when we pushed through the corn and came to where he was. The corn grew close up to its edges, but it was a cellar, as plain as anything could be. The cellar wall had been made of creek stones, piled up, and it had mostly crumbled inward, half filling the cellar and, on top of the stones, brush and trash, and old tin boilers and tin cans, and a couple of bedsprings and some old rusted barbed wire had been dumped, but there were four or five ends of squared logs, burned down to the ends, and we guessed what had happened to that house — it had burned down.

The cellar was small, not over ten feet square, and we judged the house had been small — maybe an old log cabin and maybe not — but it had been a house, and it was near the creek and near the hill road, and it was the only sign of a house Jibby had been able to find.

“I couldn’t find the crossroad, nor a sign of it,” Jibby said. “And there’s no sign of a signal pine. But over yonder is the creek, and this must have been the house, if the whole map wasn’t just a fake and a fooler. This is the only place that could be Greenland.”

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“Well,” I said, “away back in the good steamboat days there was a lot more Greenland than this is. Only it wasn’t up here on the hill; it was down at the bottom of the hill and over toward the river. I’ve heard folks talk about it more than once, because in those days Greenland was bigger than Riverbank — it had ten or twelve houses and Riverbank had only eight or nine — and Greenland thought it was going to be the biggest city west of New York. The steamers stopped here for wood, because they all burned wood. But when coal came, the big steamers stopped coming here, and then the railroad went down the other side of the river, and Greenland busted. There wasn’t any more Greenland.”

So Jibby got out the map again and studied it.

“I don’t think this is the place,” he said suddenly.

“Why not, Jibby?” we asked him.

“Come here and I’ll show you,” he said.

He walked straight down a corn row to the place where the corn ended and the ground fell off sudden into the creek.

“Does that look like a place to hide treasure or anything else?” he asked, and we said it did not.

“Then count my steps,” he said.

He paced off, taking as long steps as he could, the distance to the ruined cellar, and it made fifty paces.

“Now,” he said, “on this map the house is about halfway between the creek and the road. The road ought to be fifty paces west of the house. Count my steps.”

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He paced off fifty steps.

"This is where the pine tree ought to be, but it isn't here," he said. "But we won't worry about that; it may have been cut down and the roots grubbed up. But if there was ever a road here, where the map says it was, it ought to run east of north. That would be in this direction."

He led us through the corn in the direction the map showed the road should have gone. Nothing but corn! So we came to the edge of the hill, looking off over the bottomland and the slough and the river. We saw in a minute that no road could have gone down that hill — it was so steep you might call it a bluff. Jibby pulled out the map and showed it to us.

"Look where the creek runs on the map, back of the house," he said. "It was fifty paces from the side of the house to the creek, and by the map it would be about fifty paces to the creek from the back of the house, because the creek turns and runs back of the house. Where is your creek?"

Well, there was no creek! If that creek had run where the map said it ran, it would have had to balance itself in the air ten paces out beyond the edge of the hill.

"All very well!" said Jibby. "Now look down below there. Follow the creek from where it comes down the hill to where it goes into the slough."

We saw our mistake then, or thought we did. The turn of the creek was not up on the hill at all; it was down there in the bottomland. We could trace it as

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plain as day, because it was edged thick with willows. And, as we stood there looking at the place where the creek made its turn toward the west, we heard a noise of "chuck! chuck! chuck!" It was a spade chucking into soft soil. The Tough Customer and the Rat were there ahead of us!

Well, there wasn't anything for us to do but go home and let our treasure-hunting go for that day. We couldn't go down there and fight the Tough Customer and the Rat, and we had no right to, because they had got to the place first. And we would not have fought them, anyway. A bunch of boys can't drive away two desperate characters in any such way. So we sat on the hill awhile and listened to the Tough Customer and the Rat digging away, and then we got up and started for home. And it was time, anyway, because we had that long fight through the bottomland to get back to our motorboat.

On the way back to the boat we talked a lot about what we could do and what we couldn't do, and we rested a lot and fooled around a lot, and the sun was getting low when we got back to the boat. And the first glance at the boat showed that some one had been there; some one had whacked the motor with an axe or a spade until it looked mighty much like a heap of junk.

"The Tough Customer!" Wampus said, as mad as a hatter, and we all thought the same, but there was no way to prove it. The only thing we could do

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was to get into the boat and shove it into the current and float down home the best we could, urging the boat toward our shore with the oars. It was dark when we got home, and we were mighty tired and hungry, and the first person we saw was Wampus's father. He was standing on the ripraps waiting for us.

"About time!" he said. "I came up with Parcell and I've been waiting two hours for you to get home so you could run me back to town. What's the matter with the boat?"

"It's busted," Wampus said.

"Can't you fix it?" his father asked.

"No; it's too badly busted," Wampus told him. "It'll have to be mended down in town. I guess maybe it'll cost thirty or forty dollars."

Mr. Smale did not like that a bit.

"Very well, my son!" he said. "If that's the case, that boat will remain 'busted' until you earn the money to have it mended. I've paid for repairing that boat as many times as I intend to. You are old enough to take care of that boat properly now, and it is your property. I'm through with it."

We all felt pretty sick. There wasn't much use thinking of doing more treasure-hunting unless we had the motor-boat to go up-river in.

Jibby was the first to say anything as we walked toward our cottages.

"It appears to me," he said in his solemn way, "that it is not right to let Wampus pay for repairing

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that boat. The boat was being used by the Land Pirate Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company, and the Company ought to pay for the repairs."

"Sure!" I said, laughing. "And how much money has the Company got to pay with?"

We counted up, and we had three dollars and sixty-seven cents. The part of it I had was the seven cents.

"I didn't mean exactly that," Jibby said. "I meant that the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company ought to earn the money to pay for repairing the boat."

"By finding treasure?" I asked, as sarcastic as anything.

"Why, no," Jibby said, without a smile. "I did not mean that. I was thinking the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company might mine the Five Friends' Worm Mine and get the money that way."

You couldn't beat Jibby Jones when it came to thinking of things.

CHAPTER XII

THE WORM MINE

THE next morning we all went down to the shaft-house, which was the old shack near Mosquito Hollow, and set to work in the worm mine. Jibby's idea was that we should mine some first-class worms and then set a trot-line in the river and bait it with the worms, and twice a day we would "run" the trot-line and get the fish. Then we would sell the fish to our folks and to the other families on our island. And, every day when we were not running the trot-line, we would be catching fish with poles, and we would sell those fish, too. And before the summer was over, we would, maybe, have enough money to have Wampus's motor-boat mended.

Well, I don't know how that would have worked out, because we did not raise the money that way. We got it by solving the mystery of the stolen cider that we had heard the Rat talking to the Tough Customer about. But the credit belongs to Jibby Jones — I guess you will see that.

It was Skippy Root's father that offered the reward, because the barrels were his barrels. They had been stolen from his wholesale grocery house down in Riverbank.

The reward was twenty-five dollars, and there was something funny about the whole business, and

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my father and Mr. Root and Mr. Smale, and Tad's father and Mr. Jones knew the joke and laughed about it a lot up on Birch Island where we were spending the summer, but they did not tell us or anybody. The notice in the paper only said, "\$25 Reward for information leading to the recovery of five barrels stolen from the Root Wholesale Grocery," or something like that. But I'll tell you what the joke was. We found out later on.

One of the things Mr. Root sold in his wholesale grocery was cider — sweet cider — and he sold it by the barrel, but he had five barrels of sweet cider that turned hard while it was in his grocery cellar, and it was against the law to sell hard cider or to have it around, so he thought he had better get rid of it. He didn't want to go to jail. Nobody does, I guess.

So one day Mr. Root went out onto the platform back of his grocery and he said to his truck-driver:

"Joe, I've got five barrels of cider in the cellar that has turned hard, and I want to get rid of it. I want you to haul those five barrels down to the river to-morrow and empty that hard cider into the river and bring the barrels back. I don't want any hard cider around here."

"All right, Mr. Root," Joe said; "I'll do it to-morrow."

Well, that was all right, but it happened that there were a lot of men in the alley near the platform just then, standing around and looking at a trained bear an Italian had, and one of them must

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have heard Mr. Root and wanted hard cider, for that night the grocery cellar was broken into and five barrels were stolen out of it. But the joke was that the thief did not get the five barrels of hard cider; he got five barrels of molasses. He made a mistake. He took the molasses and left the hard cider. So the next day Joe dumped out the cider and Mr. Root offered a reward for the molasses. But nobody came for the reward, and it looked as if all that molasses was gone forever. And the thing Mr. Root and father and all the men laughed about was how surprised the thieves would be when they broached a barrel to have a good drink of hard cider and found it was molasses. They thought the thieves would be pretty badly surprised and scared, because, instead of taking five barrels of cider that Mr. Root did not want, they would have taken five barrels of molasses he did want. They would be mighty worried thieves.

But nobody found the molasses or caught the thieves and everybody forgot all about it.

We worked inside the shack at first, digging deeper and deeper, and we got pretty good worms and quite a lot of them.

"But say!" Wampus said, all of a sudden. "Say! Anybody can come into our mine and mine worms; we don't really own it. We don't know who does own this ground down here at this end of the island."

Jibby stroked his nose awhile and thought.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "I've got to find

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out about that. Mostly, miners can mine wherever they want to. The man that owns the land owns the surface, but, when a prospector locates a mine and sinks his shaft, he can mine anywhere he wants to, underground. I don't know whether a worm miner has that right or not. I know it is true of mineral mines, but a worm isn't quite a mineral; it is an animal. Anyway, I think we had better stake out a claim here, because that is what miners always do."

So we staked out a claim, stakes at the four corners, so that it took in the whole of Mosquito Hollow. It turned out to be all right, anyway, because Skippy's father owned the shack and the hollow, but we felt better when we had our claim staked out. It was more regular and like real miners.

We got the shaft about as deep as we thought it needed to be, and the next morning we began to tunnel. We aimed the tunnel so it would go under the back of the shack toward Mosquito Hollow, because that was the best worm-bearing ore on the island, and, as soon as we began to tunnel, Jibby got a saw and a hatchet and some nails and sent some of us to get driftwood planks and boards, to use as mine timber to shore up the tunnel with.

Almost as soon as we began to run the tunnel out toward Mosquito Hollow, we struck better worm ore, and it got better all the time. Out of two spadefuls of ore we could refine enough worms to last a boy for a whole day's fishing, even if the white perch were stealing his bait as fast as he could put it on the

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hook. In half an hour after we had begun to tunnel, we had enough worms to last the six of us a week.

"That's enough," Jibby said. "We'll quit now and put up a sign on the shack — 'Five Friends' Worm Mine. Keep Out!' — and not mine any more until we need more worms."

I didn't like that idea; none of us did. Mining worms was more fun than fishing or anything else, and we all hated to stop, but it was Wampus who thought of the big idea.

"Look here," he said, leaning on his spade, "what's the use of quitting? We've got a worm mine here that is the best and only in the world, and we've got the richest worm ore anybody could ever find. It is the driest season for twenty years, and worms are harder to get than they ever were. That's so, isn't it?"

It was, and we all said so.

"All right, then," Wampus said, "now is the time to mine worms. Now is the time everybody will be glad to buy worms. Now is the time when we have the only worm mine in existence, but in a week or so somebody will hear of the Five Friends' Worm Mine and start another worm mine somewhere, and then there will be more and more worm mines started and everybody will be selling worms."

"Selling them?" said Skippy.

"Sure!" Wampus said. "I said 'selling them' and I mean 'selling them.' Why, right here on Birch Island, we can sell a can of worms a day to every

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family on the island. How many? Twenty families? And some will need two cans. Say twenty-four cans a day. And, leaving out Sundays, there are about sixty-five days that the families are up here — that makes one hundred and thirty dozen cans of worms for the season. If we only got ten cents a can, that would be one hundred and fifty-six dollars."

"Ten cents a can for worms like these!" exclaimed Tad, holding up a big one. "They are worth a cent apiece! If we put one hundred in a can we ought to get a dollar a can."

"That would be one thousand and fifty-six dollars, then," Wampus said. "And only for what we sell on this island. Oh, boy! And think of how many people go fishing from town who don't spend the summer on this island — hundreds!"

"From town?" Skippy cried. "What do you say 'from town' for? From all up and down the old Mississippi! From all over the United States, everywhere! Yes, and in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America people go fishing, don't they? If we are going to sell worms . . ."

"Canned ones," I said, "packed in cans with holes in the lids, like pepper-boxes, so the worms can breathe."

We were all getting excited — all except Jibby Jones. All Jibby said was:

"Aluminum cans, because, if there are holes in the lids and the earth in the cans is moist, cans made of tin would rust."

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"And, anyway," said Wampus, jumping at that idea quick, "aluminum cans would be better than tin; they would be lighter to ship and lighter for fishermen to carry. When we get to shipping tons and tons of worms, the difference in the weight of the cans will save us hundreds of dollars in freight. And I say we ought to have a special can with a wire handle, like a lard pail, only smaller, so boys could carry cans of our worms easily when they go fishing."

"Sure! Of course, we'll do that," I said, "and we ought to have a patent lid — one that will come off and fit on again, like the lid of a baking-powder can."

"And with letters stamped on it," said Skippy. "It ought to be stamped 'Five Friends' Mine — Best Quality Fishing Worms — Riverbank, Iowa.'"

"Yes," said Wampus, "when they were our best quality, but you don't think we are going to throw away all the medium and small worms we get out of the mine, do you? No, sir! We'll have three grades — Best Quality, Prime Quality, and Family Quality. They will be one dollar a can, seventy-five cents a can, and fifty cents a can."

"Except the half-size and the trial cans," said Tad.

"Yes, and except the pails of bulk worms, assorted," said Skippy. "We've got to have some put up that way, and maybe some in kegs and some in barrels, for general stores in the places where they don't catch anything but goggle-eyes and mud-

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cats. These would be the cheapest we would sell. They would be for stores where boys would come in with their own old rusty tomato cans and say, 'Say, mister, gimme two cents' worth of fishing worms.'"

Well, we went on planning about the worm mine that way for two or three days and we kept right on digging the tunnel out under Mosquito Hollow and timbering it up. Here and there we ran into sand, which has no worms in it, and then we shifted the direction of the tunnel a little. Jibby said the proper way was to follow the worm-veins wherever they went.

CHAPTER XIII

THE VIKING SHIP

IN a little while we had every old tin can on the island filled with worms and choice crumbly black earth in which they would be well and hearty and feel comfortable and at home. Then we began filling old pails, and wash-pitchers with the handles off, and boxes, and were fussing a little about who would go on the road and travel from town to town selling worms for the Five Friends' and taking winter orders for spring delivery. We decided that Jibby would be the best salesman because he looked serious-minded and truthful with his big nose and tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, but we decided he would have to wear a brand-new suit of clothes and carry a cane.

We decided that the Best Quality Five Friends' worms should have a label with a black bass on it, and that the Prime Quality label should have a pick-erel picture, and the Family Quality a picture of a perch or a goggle-eye. We decided all those details. Skippy wanted to have "None genuine without this signature" printed on the label, but we gave that up because there were five of us and it would crowd the label to have five signatures; and Wampus wanted to advertise in all the magazines and on the

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billboards and in all the street-cars, but we did not decide to do it. We decided to let that wait a while.

Jibby did not talk much. He dug and picked worms and timbered the gallery and carried out dirt, but something was bothering him. We thought he would mention it when he got ready, but he didn't, so we asked him.

"Water," he said. "I'm worrying about water. What are we going to do if the mine floods?"

"If the mine floods?" Wampus said, stopping work.

We all stopped work and looked at Jibby, because we all knew that a flooded mine is a dead mine and can't be worked until pumps are rigged up and the water pumped out. And nearly every spring the whole lower end of Birch Island is flooded, and it is a rare spring when Mosquito Hollow is not. Just about as sure as spring came, our whole mine would be under water.

"But that's not what worries me," Jibby said. "It is these streaks of sand we have run into here and there. The whole island won't have to be flooded to flood our mine; as soon as the water in the river rises a little, it will begin to seep through that sand and flood the mine. Then our mine is gone. No more worm mining."

Well, the flood came, but not in the way we expected. Wampus was working at the end of the tunnel one day, digging out worm ore with his pick, and Tad and Skippy were carrying it to the shaft, and

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me and Jibby were hoisting it up in baskets and refining the worms out of it, when Wampus shouted to us that he had struck a tree-trunk. He shouted back through the tunnel to us that it was right across the tunnel and that he would have to have an axe to chop it away, or he would have to tunnel around it.

The tunnel was just about big enough for two boys to crawl through on hands and knees together, so Tad took our electric torch and crawled in. He and Wampus scraped more dirt away, and then came crawling out, and you bet they were excited.

"It ain't a tree-trunk at all," Tad said. "It's the side of a boat — an oak boat — and it is bound with iron bands, and I'll bet I know what it is. It's an old viking ship. It's a great find! I'll bet we can dig it out and sell it to a museum for a million dollars or something."

"Sure!" Wampus said. "An old viking ship would be worth that. I bet the vikings from Norway or somewhere sailed over to America hundreds of years before Columbus did, and discovered the Mississippi, and got shipwrecked on this island, or maybe the Indians killed them, and the river dumped sand and dirt on their ship and covered it up and preserved it. Who knows the name of a museum that would be likely to buy a viking ship?"

"I do," said Jibby Jones, "but I wouldn't spend the money you expect to get for that ship yet. No! Because I never heard of viking ships sailing up the Mississippi."

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"That makes it all the rarer," Wampus said. "You go in and look at it yourself."

So Jibby took the torch and crawled in, and I crawled in after him, and Skippy and Tad and Wampus crawled after us. Jibby felt the ship and so did I. It was oak, sure enough, and rounded like a ship's hull, but in a minute Jibby laughed.

"It's not a ship," he said; "it's a barrel. I guess it's an old barrel the river floated in here and covered up. Give me the pick."

I handed him the pick, and Jibby sat back and gave the barrel a whack with one of the points of the pick, and the pick stuck fast. The point of the pick went through the oak of the barrel and stuck in the hole it made. So Jibby sort of raised up and put his weight on the pick handle and pulled, and all at once the whole side of the barrel seemed to give and the oak staves cracked and out poured — molasses!

The first big gush of it went on Jibby and in his lap, and then I got my share, and we both shouted and scrambled to our hands and knees to get away from there, and Skippy and Tad and Wampus did not know what had happened, but were plenty frightened and tried to get away, and they got tangled up and jammed in the tunnel like a cork down a bottle neck, and nobody could get out. Except the molasses.

The molasses poured out. In about half a minute we were in a regular river of it and all of us covered with it.

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"Go on out! Go on out!" I shouted, and Tad and Wampus and Skippy were pushing and pulling each other, and shouting, and then I began to laugh. I couldn't help it. It was funny — five of us stuck in the molasses like flies. It was the first time I ever heard of a mine being flooded with molasses. Then we all began to laugh, except Jibby Jones, and he said, as solemn as ever:

"I think we will get the reward."

That was like him. Even when he was down in a worm mine stuck in a flood of molasses, he was always thinking ahead.

Well, we did get the reward. It turned out that the men that stole the barrels of molasses had buried them there in Mosquito Hollow, thinking they were hard cider. They thought they would leave it there until it was safe to take it somewhere and sell it.

When we went up to the cottages, Wampus's mother was on her porch, and when she saw how soiled we were she said:

"Well! You are a sweet lot, aren't you!"

But she didn't know how sweet we really were.

Mr. Root laughed and laughed when he saw us and heard that we had discovered the stolen molasses, and he paid us the reward and said it was worth it to see five boys molassesed up that way, and I guess it was.

We don't know who did it, but the next morning, when we went to the mine to see how bad the wreck was, somebody had changed the sign we had put on

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the shack door. It said, now: "Five Sweet Friends' Worm and Molasses Mine. Keep Out!"

With the reward money and what we got for as many worms as we sold — which were not very many — we had Wampus's motor-boat mended, and the first trip we took in it was up the river. We ran into Greenland Slough, and the first thing that hit our eyes was that old shanty-boat, and the Tough Customer sitting on the narrow deck, fishing in the slough, with a can of worms beside him.

As the motor-boat came closer, the Rat poked his head out of the door of the shanty-boat and began to curse and swear like a regular pirate. The Tough Customer turned and gave him an ugly look and told him to shut up and hold his mouth. Then he called to us, and Wampus ran the motor-boat in close.

"Say, you fellers!" the Tough Customer called. "Looky here; I want to talk to you."

"Well, what is it?" Wampus asked.

"I just want to tell you something," the Tough Customer said. "If you got a piece of paper that fell off'n this boat when that fat feller whacked the end mighty near off'n this boat, you'd better hand it over here and now, because me and my pardner ain't going to stand no more foolishness. That's our paper, and, if you don't hand it over, we're going to have the law on you, and maybe jail you; so hand it over while you got the chance."

Jibby Jones looked at the Tough Customer through his tortoise-shell spectacles.

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"My gracious!" he said, as solemn as an old owl. "I would not like to be put in jail for stealing! Not in some jails, at any rate. What jail would we be put in, do you suppose? Do you think it would be the one at Helena, Arkansas?"

The Tough Customer glared at Jibby — that's the only word for it. Then he worked his jaws and pointed his finger at Jibby and sputtered, but he was so mad he couldn't say a word, and Jibby leaned over and accelerated the motor-boat, and we swung around and went scooting down the slough, with the exhaust snapping like a machine gun.

"That's all right, anyway," Jibby said. "We know one thing; they haven't found the treasure yet. If they had, they wouldn't care who had the map."

CHAPTER XIV

UNCLE BEESWAX

THREE times after that we went up to Greenland Slough, and two of the times we went up the creek, because the Tough Customer and the Rat were not at the mouth of the creek to guard it. One of the times we found them up the creek where they were doing their treasure digging, but the third time they were nowhere around, and we had a chance to see what they had been doing.

For plain ordinary everyday tramps they had done a lot of work, I will say. Nobody could have hired them, for day's wages, to do as much digging as they had done. They had dug in eleven places — five on one bank of the creek and six on the other — and the holes were deep enough to bury oxen in, one on top of the other and both standing. They had tried one place and then another, and anybody could see that they had been puzzled and not sure where the cross mark on the map had been. That, we guessed, was why they were so anxious to get the map. They hadn't found anything, and they didn't know what to do next.

And neither did we. As nearly as we could figure it out, the Tough Customer and the Rat had dug one of their holes right spang on the spot where the "X" mark on the map showed that the treasure

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should be, if there was any. If they hadn't found anything with all that digging, there wasn't much chance that we would.

By this time we had got into the second week of August, and there was not any too much of vacation left. We walked up and down the creek, studying the lay of the land, but there was no question that the Tough Customer had found the right spot, according to the map. There was only one turn in the creek toward the west, and that was where they had dug. We thought, perhaps, the creek might have shifted, but when we walked here and there we saw that it hadn't. It looked hopeless, and we were just ready to leave, when we saw a man come loping toward us, half doubled up and not wasting a bit of time, and after him were the Tough Customer, hobbling faster than you would believe a one-legged man could hobble, and the Rat. The Rat was making good time, too, but he didn't seem anxious to go ahead of the Tough Customer.

As the man they were after came nearer and saw us, he came toward us, and when he had covered a few more yards we saw he was the old man everybody calls "Uncle Beeswax." He had an axe and two baskets, and by the time he reached us he was just about all in. He was so out of breath that he couldn't talk, and it was plain enough he was almost too scared to talk, anyway.

The far side of the creek was five or six feet higher than the side we were on. When Uncle Beeswax

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came up to us and we saw he was being chased, we grabbed his axe and baskets and took him by the arms and hustled him across the creek and up the bank. Maybe we might have hustled on up the hill with him, but he was plumb played out. He dropped down on the short grass and just panted.

"No use!" he panted. "Played out! Got to rest — got to rest!"

So we let him rest, and we turned and took a look at the Tough Customer and his pardner. They had stopped about fifty feet away, and were looking at us and talking to each other. Whatever they had been chasing old Uncle Beeswax for, I guess they didn't like the idea of tackling five husky boys and a man, even if he was an old man. So, after a minute or two, they sat down and watched us. The Tough Customer was pretty well played out himself, stumping so far on a wooden leg.

Now, we all knew Uncle Beeswax, except maybe Jibby Jones, and we knew there wasn't a mean drop of blood in him, or any harm. He was one of the most aged men any of us knew, and he lived a mile or so farther up the river in a shanty-boat of his own, and he was all right. He was a little old man, hardly as tall as Wampus, and he had a long white beard that almost touched the ground. The thing you thought of when you saw him was a gnome, the kind you see in pictures with a long pointed cap and a pick to dig gold with. He made his living mostly by finding bee trees, and selling the honey and beeswax to

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folks in Riverbank, but he fished some, and along in the fall he hunted for wild grapes and sold them for about a dollar a bushel, or maybe a dollar and a half.

We island boys had seen old Uncle Beeswax hundreds of times, but he had always acted solemn and severe and fussy and nervous, as if he was afraid we would meddle with his skiff or something. Probably boys teased him a lot because he was so funny-looking; anyway, he did not like boys. And one of the things they teased him about was his nose. He hated to be teased about his nose, because he never drank a drop, but his nose was as long as Jibby Jones's nose, but thick and bulby and as red as fire.

So there we were like two armies, we on the high ground and the Tough Customer and the Rat on the low ground, and each waiting to see what the other would do. And presently Uncle Beeswax got his breath.

"Can't understand it! Can't understand it!" he said, shaking his head so that his long beard wiggled back and forth. "Never was chased in my life before. And they acted like they would kill me, them men."

"What for?" I asked him.

"Nothin'!" he said. "Nothin' at all! I was in yonder" — and he pointed toward the swamp below the slough — "a-lookin' for grape trees, and I come out again. The skeeters was too much for me — they was eatin' me alive. And I was tuckered; I'm old; I'm mighty old."

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"Well, they didn't chase you because you were old, did they?" I asked him, because he stopped talking.

"I don't know why they chased me," he said, as if his feelings were hurt that anybody should. "I wasn't doin' harm. I just sat down on the edge of their pesky little shanty-boat to rest my legs, and they come at me, yellin' and shoutin', and chased me."

He made a move to wipe the sweat off his face, and when he opened his hand there was a piece of paper crumpled in it.

"Huh!" he said. "There it be, hey? I thought I'd lost it, bein' chased."

"What is it?" I asked him.

He spread it out on his knee.

"Month or so ago," he said, "I was speculatin' through the swamp yonder and I come onto a grape tree —"

Well, we knew what a grape tree was. A grape tree is not a tree that bears grapes the way an apple tree bears apples. A grape tree is a tree the wild grapevines have climbed over until you can't see the tree and can only see masses and masses of grapevine. And one year one of these trees will have bushels and bushels of wild grapes, and no other grape trees around there will have any. The man that can find a good grape tree and get the grapes off it is lucky.

"I come onto this grape tree a month or so ago,"

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Uncle Beeswax said, "and I made a map showin' whereabouts it was, so I could go back to it when the grapes was ripe. And to-day I was tryin' to find it, but I couldn't. The skeeters got too bad for me before I traced to the tree. So I was settin' on this shanty-boat lookin' at my map I had made —"

"And they came up?" Wampus asked. "That's it, then. Those men lost a map, and they want it, and they thought you had it. They wanted to get it away from you."

Uncle Beeswax's face wrinkled, and we knew he was grinning.

"If that's all," he said, "they can have it. I don't want it. It ain't no good, noway. I can't make nothing out of it myself, and they can't neither."

So, at that, Skippy Root stood up and yelled at the Tough Customer.

"Hey!" he yelled. "He hasn't got your map! All he's got is a map of a grape tree. You can see it, if you want to."

The Tough Customer and the Rat consulted together, and the Tough Customer came to their side of the creek, and Jibby Jones took the map of the swamp and grape tree and went over to them and showed it to them. It satisfied them that Uncle Beeswax did not have their map. So Jibby told them, straight and plain, that if anybody had their map we had it, and that we meant to keep it. Then he asked them if they had found anything. The Tough Customer told him it was none of his busi-

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ness what they had found or what they hadn't found, and then he and the Rat went back toward their shanty-boat and Jibby climbed up our bank of the creek. Uncle Beeswax had got onto his feet again and was going away, but, as Jibby's head came up over the edge of the bank, Uncle Beeswax stopped dead short and looked at Jibby and stared at him with his mouth wide open.

"Noble!" he said, when he had stared and stared. "Just plumb noble, and there ain't any other words for it! What a nose! What a nose!"

Now, most folks would have been mad if anybody said that, but Jibby Jones wasn't — he was proud of his nose. Jibby talked about his nose more than anybody else did, because it was a family relic, or something, and had come down to him from his Grandfather Parmenter and his Great-Grandfather Parmenter and his Great-Great-Grandfather Parmenter. Some folks are proud of a colonial spinning-wheel that has been in the family three hundred years, but Jibby was proud of his nose. And I guess he was right. A nose is a better relic than a spinning-wheel any day; it is handier. It don't have to be dusted, and you can wash it when you are washing the rest of your face and save time that way, and you can carry it with you wherever you go. You have to. So Jibby looked at old Uncle Beeswax and grinned.

"It's my jib," he said. "When the wind blows too hard, I have to take a couple of reefs in it."

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Well, I guess Uncle Beeswax didn't have a chance to hear many jokes, and when he heard that one he put down his basket and sat down on a stump and laughed and laughed. He whacked his leg, and I thought he would die, he laughed so hard.

"Jib, hey?" he chuckled when he could get his breath. "Jib, is it? Well, if that's so you ought to have some of my beeswax to waterproof it with. Nothing like good old beeswax to keep the weather from ruinin' a jib."

Then he went off in another spell of laughing, and whacked his leg and the tears rolled down his face and got into his beard.

So Jibby told him all about his nose and how he got it from his Grandfather Parmenter and how George Washington had complimented Jibby's Great-Great-Grandfather Parmenter on *his* nose, and in a couple of minutes old Uncle Beeswax was as chummy as a kid with us and told us all about his nose and how useful it was and all the forty or fifty things he had used to try to keep it from being so red, but no hope. He said it was a headstrong nose and if it made up its mind to be red it was bound to be red, and no use fooling with it.

"If I had two of 'em," he said, "and the other was a green one, I'd look like a steamboat."

He showed where he would have his two noses, if he had two, one on either cheek.

"But one is plenty," he said. "When a man has a nose like mine, or like yours," he added politely to

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Jibby, "he has no excuse to covet any more nose. He's got a bountiful supply."

He said it all with a twinkle in his eye, and from then on he was a good fellow with us.

We asked him if he knew much about Greenland, and he said he had been born in a house right about where we were sitting, which would be just about where the house was on the treasure map. So we asked him if anybody named M'rell had ever lived in that house, or in Greenland, or anywhere that he knew of. He said never. He said nobody named that had ever been anywhere that he had ever heard of. So then we told him about the land pirate and the treasure, and he said it was all nonsense, because if anybody from down Arkansas way had ever been anywhere around there, he would have known it. So we told him not to say anything about the treasure, and told him that was what the Tough Customer and the Rat were after, and he said he would keep mum about it and sort of keep an eye on the Tough Customer and the Rat and let us know if anything happened.

CHAPTER XV

THE GRAPE TREE

WELL, one afternoon — it was about two weeks later — I was sitting on the grass where the mud cove is, just below our cottage up there on our Birch Island, and Jibby Jones was sitting beside me. We weren't doing anything but waiting, or nothing much else, but we had three or four empty baskets and a rake and an axe beside us. We were waiting for Uncle Beeswax, because he was going to take us to get wild grapes.

One day, just after we had met him at Greenland Creek Uncle Beeswax had stopped at Birch Island to see if our folks wanted any honey or beeswax. Generally, when he stopped at our island he went right past us boys and up to the cottages, but since we had saved him from the Tough Customer he liked us, I guess. That day Jibby Jones was rigging up a trot-line, and after Uncle Beeswax had told us that the Tough Customer and the Rat were still digging at the creek bank, and had said, a couple of times, "My, what a nose! My, what a noble nose!" he put down his baskets and looked at what Jibby was doing, and shook his head.

"Who taught you that way to tie hooks on a trot-line?" he asked.

THE GRAPE TREE

“Nobody did,” Jibby said in his solemn way. “I evolved this way out of my own head.”

“Well, it is no way at all,” said Uncle Beeswax. “Let me show you.”

So he showed Jibby how to fix hooks on a trot-line. You know what a trot-line is. It is a long, stout fish-line — mighty stout, too — and sometimes a quarter of a mile long, or more. You tie one end to a tree on the bank and have the rest of the line coiled in your skiff, with the hooks tied on about three or four feet apart, and while some one rows your skiff out into the river you pay out the line. When you come to the end of the line, you tie a big anchor rock on the end of it and chuck it overboard. The hooks are not fastened directly onto the trot-line. Each hook is on a short line of its own — maybe a foot and a half long, and the ends of these lines are tied to the trot-line. That lets them float free and gives a fish some play when it gets caught. Otherwise it might break away easier. It was the way Jibby was tying these hook-lines to the trot-line that Uncle Beeswax did not like.

“If you tie them that way, Jibby,” he said, “they’ll slide back and forth along the line when a big fish gets on them. This is the right way.”

So he showed Jibby, but Jibby did not bother to go over the job again. He thought the line might do as it was, because it was a big job to untie hundreds of hard knots and he wanted to get his trot-line in the water and catch some fish.

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After that old Uncle Beeswax used to stop at the island every day he went by, and he knew more about the old river, and told us more, than any man ever did, except, maybe, Wampus Smale's Uncle Oscar. What Uncle Oscar did not know Uncle Beeswax did.

Anyway, Jibby Jones put out his trot-line that afternoon after Uncle Beeswax went. He tied one end to a tree by the mud cove and Wampus and I rowed the skiff while Jibby paid out the trot-line and he anchored the far end out beyond the middle of the river with a rock big enough to hold a house from floating away. After that we "ran" the trot-line twice a day and we always got fish — sometimes three or four catfish and white perch and sometimes a carp or two, but always some. When you "run" a trot-line one fellow rows the skiff to keep the current from sweeping it downstream too strong, and the other sits in the bow of the boat with the trot-line dragging over it. He pulls the boat along by pulling on the trot-line, and when he comes to a hook-line he takes off the fish — if there is one — and baits the hook and lets it slide back down into the water.

So that's that. There was Jibby's trot-line stretching out a quarter of a mile or so from our island, dipping into the river just a few feet beyond the tree it was tied to, like a submarine cable that did not go quite to Buffalo Island. When we were out "running" the line, old Uncle Beeswax would row toward us, if he happened to be rowing by, and he

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would ask how many fish we were getting, and things like that.

So, on this day in August, Jibby and I were out "running" the trot-line and Wampus was in the stern of our skiff, and here came old Uncle Beeswax rowing out from the shore of Buffalo Island toward us. There was quite a breeze blowing and his long gray whiskers blew out like a pennant. He rowed up alongside, and he was almost bobbing up and down on his seat, he was so excited.

"My, my!" he cried. "My, oh, my! I just ran across the grandest grape tree I ever saw in my whole life, bar none whatever! More wild grapes than I ever saw in one place in all my born days. A big tree and just loaded down and weighted down and covered with grapes."

Well, we knew why he had come to tell us. He had said that sometime when he found a fine grape tree he would let us know and take us with him to get wild grapes, and he had found one. It was loaded down with wild grapes, Uncle Beeswax said. There were so many wild grapes the tree looked blue instead of green. It was worth going miles to see — just to see, mind you! — and all those grapes were ours just for the getting! Bushels of them! No wonder Uncle Beeswax was excited.

He was so excited he sputtered when he tried to talk, and his old hands trembled. It meant money for him because he sold wild grapes to women who wanted to make jelly, but he was almost as pleased

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because he could show Jibby and us a real grape tree, and lead us where we could get our share of grapes from the most wonderful grape tree any man ever saw. It was a poor year for grapes, but that is the way the wild grapes behave. You'll walk miles and see only a few skinny bunches that are all bird-picked and not worth bothering with, and then you'll run across one tree just loaded down with vines and the vines loaded with full bunches of lovely blue grapes.

Uncle Beeswax tried to tell us where the tree was, but we could not understand. We thought we had walked all over Buffalo Island, and we had never seen a tree like that. So he took a piece of paper from Jibby and a pencil from Wampus and he tried to draw a map. By the map we understood pretty well where the tree must be, and the reason we had never seen it was because it was hidden. The map Uncle Beeswax made showed why.

Right straight across the river from the tree Jibby had his trot-line tied to was a sycamore tree on Buffalo Island. If you rowed across from Jibby's trot-line tree to the sycamore tree and climbed the bank, you got into a tangle of briars and tall nettles and wild flax and poison ivy thirty or forty feet wide, and that was a jungle nobody would want to break through. Just back of that was a sort of gully that the river had hollowed out, and that gully had been mushy mud all summer. It ran up and down for an eighth of a mile, both ways.

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Now, you know how all those islands are — all a mess of trees and vines and tangles of one sort and another. Whenever we landed on Buffalo Island, we would walk down along the shore until we were below the mushy gully, or up until we were above it, and, when we were coming from the other side and struck the gully, we did the same. That was all right, but we had been fooled every time. There was not just one gully; there were two of them. They joined together at their upper and lower ends. What we had always done, and what any one would do, was to look across the gully from the side toward the river and think we saw the woods on the other side, but what we saw was a little island of woods. The same way, looking across the gully from the island side of it, we thought we saw the tangle that was along the bank of the river, but we really saw the little island of woods. Those islands fool you a thousand times, that way. So there was the little island between its mud gullies and that was where the wonderful grape tree was. All that had happened was that the hot, dry August days had dried the mud in the gullies, and Uncle Beeswax had walked across on the dry cakes of mud and had found the grape tree.

That was simple enough, but if Uncle Beeswax could do it the next man looking for grapes could do it, too, and, with everybody looking for grapes for jelly and for wine, that might happen any minute. No wonder he was excited.

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He made it all clear enough for us and he gave Jibby the map. We dropped the trot-line back into the water in a hurry, I tell you! This was what we were to do. Jibby and Wampus and I were to row back to our island and tell Skippy Root and Tad Willing and get baskets and axes and a rake or two. The rakes were to pull down the vines. The axes were to chop down the tree. It's a ruinous way to do, but it is the way every one does.

Uncle Beeswax was to row up to his shanty-boat and get his own baskets and axe and rake and he was to stop at our mud cove for Jibby and me. Wampus and Skippy and Tad were to go in one skiff, and Uncle Beeswax and Jibby and I in the other. So Uncle Beeswax rowed off up the river and Jibby and Wampus and I rowed home across the river.

We hunted up Skippy and Tad and told them what was up, and they got busy. They got baskets and axes and rakes, and Jibby and I did the same, and then Skippy and Wampus and Tad took my skiff and rowed away. They were to go over to the shore by the big sycamore tree and wait for us. We had to wait for Uncle Beeswax. That was why we were sitting there on the grass by the mud cove like I told you in the beginning. So we talked, because we had nothing else to do. Only, it was Jibby who talked.

CHAPTER XVI

CONGO MAGIC

THE thing that started Jibby talking was a feather. Right between his knees when he sat down was a crow's tail feather, and he picked it up and it reminded him of something, because everything always did remind Jibby of something. He stuck it up in the ground.

"What did you do that for?" I asked him.

He looked at the feather.

"I don't know," he said. "I guess it reminded me of the time I was on the Congo River."

"What about the Congo River does an old crow's feather remind you of?" I asked him.

"Well, magic," Jibby said. "A black feather is one of the things the natives use for bad magic. They use a black feather when they want to spoil an enemy's plans. They stick a black feather in the ground like this, and then they make a ring of other stuff around it and put magic things in the circle."

He showed me how they did it. He broke up some twigs and made a circle around the feather, and then he felt in his pocket for things to put in the circle. First he found his knife, and he held it in the cup of his two hands and said something like:

"Keeko, muk-muk, chuck-a-wah chang cho!"

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Only, of course, I can't remember what it was he did say. Then he put his knife inside the magic circle, and took out a box of safety matches and said:

"Keeko, muk-muk, chuck-a-wah chang cho!"

Then he put the matches in the magic circle, and dug into his pocket again, and all he could find was three or four nails and a couple of screw eyes big enough to run a tiller rope through. He chanted:

"Keeko, muk-muk, chuck-a-wah chang cho!"

So into the magic circle went the nails and the screw eyes, and he looked around and picked up the map Uncle Beeswax had made, and he chanted over that and put that in the magic circle. Then he held out his hands over the whole business and began some more nonsense-chanting, starting low and getting louder, and I sort of got the idea and began to chant with him, and there we both were, slapping our knees and chanting away like lunatics:

"Keeko! Keeko!
Keeko, muk-muk, keeko!
Chuck-a-wah! Chuck-a-wah!
Chuck-a-wah chang cho chee!"

And over and over again. And then, all of a sudden, somebody was standing behind us. I nearly jumped out of my skin, I was so frightened at first. I thought maybe our magic had really raised an evil spirit or something, and then I saw it was Cawley Romer. And I hadn't been so far wrong, either, for Cawl Romer is one of the meanest fellows that ever



SLAPPING OUR KNEES AND CHANTING AWAY LIKE LUNATICS

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comes to our island. Only one is meaner, and that is his brother Hen. They are great big bullies.

"What are you doing?" Cawl Romer asked in that rough way a bully asks things.

"Magic," I said, as meek as Moses. "Jibby was showing me how the Congo natives do magic."

Cawl Romer was looking at the magic circle, and all at once he pushed his foot over it and knocked down the feather and scattered the twigs and things.

"I'll magic your magic for you!" he said in his mean way, but he kept his foot down and I saw why. He had it on top of the map Jibby had put in the magic circle. He bent down and took the map from under his foot. He turned it one way and another way and looked at it, but he couldn't make anything out of it, Uncle Beeswax had done it so roughly and in such a hurry.

"I know what this is," he said. "I know why you've got baskets and this rake and this axe here. You know where a grape tree is."

"It's none of your business if we do," I said, sulky-like, because I knew what Cawl Romer would be up to next.

"Is that so!" he said. "Well, I'll show you mighty soon whether it is my business or not. I saw Old Beeswax chin with you, and I saw him go rowing off up the river. A grape tree belongs to the man that gets it. I just mean to clean this one out before . . ."

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“Keeko! Keeko!
Keeko muk-muk keeko!”

chanted Jibby Jones.

He paid no attention to Cawl Romer at all, seemed like. He had stuck up the feather again and made his twig circle and was chanting as if nothing had happened.

“You listen to me,” Cawl Romer said, pushing Jibby in the back with his foot. “Do you know where this grape tree is?”

Jibby looked up at him as solemn as an owl.

“I don’t know what’s the matter with my nose!” he said. “I did know where that tree was; it was directly in front of my nose. That’s how I was going to it — I was going to follow my nose. But now my nose won’t point. It’s too bad!”

“Well, I’ll attend to that,” said Cawl Romer. “You’re going to show me where that tree is, nose or no nose, or you’ll be sorry you ever came to this island. And you, too, George. You know me! Now, you listen! I’m going up to my cottage and get Hen and some baskets, and you sit right here and don’t move! Understand that? If you’re not here, I’ll skin you and eat you when I do catch you.”

Then he went away, and he took the map with him. Jibby sat where he was until Cawl Romer was out of sight and then he jumped up like a flash.

“Hasten!” he said. “Hasten!”

I did not know what he was up to.

“What are you going to do?” I asked him.

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"Magic," he said. "Congo magic, Georgie."

He went to his skiff and took out the bait pail and chucked it and we pulled the skiff out of the water and turned it upside down. Then he took the two big screw eyes. He started one into the bottom of the skiff by hitting it with a rock and then screwed it all the way in, and then he put in the other the same way. One was nearer the bow and the other nearer the stern. Then we swung the skiff around so the stern was shoreward and the bow toward the river and Jibby did a thing that seemed almost crazy. He untied the end of his trot-line from the tree and slipped the end through the two screw eyes in the keel of the skiff and tied the end of the trot-line to a tough root near the edge of the river. Then we heaved the skiff over and pushed it out into the water so the stern just rested on shore, and went back and sat down. I began to see what he was up to. He had the skiff strung on the trot-line, under water. Those Romer bullies would row across the river but when they got just so far they would come to the end of the trot-line, where it was tied to the big anchor stone, and there the skiff would stop. I chuckled.

"Scratch a bully and you find a coward," Jibby said. "My Grandfather Parmenter used to say that, and he was a wise man. He had a nose like mine. Scratch a bully and find a coward."

"That's all right enough," I said, "but what are you going to gain by it? We could run away and

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they couldn't find us, and then we could tell our fathers and they wouldn't let the Romans hurt us."

"And they have the map," said Jibby. "If they look at it close enough, they can understand it. They'll see Wampus and Skippy and Tad by the sycamore and know that is the big dot, and they'll know the cross on the map is the grape tree. They'll have it cleaned out before Uncle Beeswax can get here. And I like Uncle Beeswax. He's my friend. He trusted us with the map. I'm going to save those grapes for him."

Well, Cawl Romer and his brother Hen came back and they acted mean and rough. They chucked our axe and our rake into Jibby's skiff as if they didn't care what damage they did, and they threw in their baskets and left ours on the shore. Then they made me get into the bow seat and they took the oars, and they made Jibby push off and hop into the stern seat.

"And no talk out of you!" Cawl said.

"Keeko!" Jibby said.

"Keeko muk-muk,
Chuck-a-wah chang cho!"

"That's magic," Cawl Romer told Hen, sneering-like. Then he said to Jibby: "You can't fool me! That's no Congo magic talk. I don't believe you ever saw the Congo. That's more like some old Chinese laundry talk or Flatfoot Indian."

Well, it didn't seem like much of a place for magic to work, even if there was such a thing. Miles and miles of blue sky, and the sun shining, and the

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big river rushing along, and we just plain boys, and the two Romers just everyday big bullies. Hen and Cawl pulled at the oars and sweated, too, for it is no easy job to row across the river there. You have to row more than half upstream or the current will carry you half a mile below where you want to go by the time you get across. And they were in a hurry, too. Uncle Beeswax was liable to come rowing down the river any time, and he was no sort of man to mix in with when he thought he had a fair right to a bee tree or a grape tree. Even big bullies like the Romers would steer clear of him then; all they wanted was to get across the river and clean up the wild grapes before Uncle Beeswax came, and all Jibby wanted was to hold them back long enough for Uncle Beeswax to show up. So Jibby chanted again.

“Keeko! Keeko!
Chuck-a-muck-a-mayo!
Chip-la, chip-la, chuck chang cho!”

he chanted, or something like that, and he took the tip of his nose in his fingers and wiggled it back and forth.

“Stop that!” Hen Romer said, as cross as a bear.
“Don’t you put any magic on us!”

“Aw, pshaw!” Cawl Romer said. “Don’t worry about him; he can’t magic a sick cat.”

But just the same he began to frown a little.

“What’s the matter with this boat?” he said. “I wouldn’t have this boat for a gift. I never knew a boat to pull as hard as this boat pulls.”

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I knew what was the matter. The screw eyes on the bottom of the skiff had come to Jibby's hook-lines on his trot-line and were dragging them along the trot-line the way Uncle Beeswax had said a big fish might.

"Row, why don't you?" Cawl shouted over his shoulder at Hen.

"I am rowing as hard as I can," Hen shouted back. "Row some yourself and don't make me do it all."

Every stroke they took the screw eyes gathered up another hook-line and added it to those they were already dragging. The Romans panted and puffed and pulled until their eyes stuck out an inch, almost, but they could just barely make the skiff move.

"Plenty keeko!" Jibby said, and stopped chanting.

"Pull, why don't you?" Cawl shouted at Hen again.

They did pull, too. Out there in the middle of the river, with the current rushing the water past the skiff and the skiff pointed halfway upstream and the shores a good distance away, no one can tell whether a skiff is moving much or not. Those two Romans buckled down hard and strained every muscle and did their level best. They got madder and madder and scolded each other, and the boat hardly moved an inch at a stroke. They kept looking over their shoulders at the Buffalo Island shore and simply humped their backs, but the shore did not seem to

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come any nearer. They rowed harder than I ever saw any one row outside of a race. They made the oars bend. Then they came to the end of the trot-line, where it dipped down to the big anchor rock and the boat did not move at all. And, away up the river, I saw a black speck that I was pretty sure must be Uncle Beeswax rowing down.

Cawl Romer rested on his oars a minute.

"What does this mean, Jones?" he asked Jibby, and he was mighty mad. "You can't fool me. There is no such thing as magic. What's the matter with this boat?"

"It don't seem to go, somehow," Jibby said.

"He's put a spell on it, that's what he's done," Hen Romer said. "You can't fool *me!* I never saw a boat yet that I couldn't row *some*. He's magicked us, Cawl."

Cawl took up his oars and began to row, but he looked worried.

"I don't believe in magic," he said, but he did not say it as if he meant it. "How could he put a spell on a boat? He couldn't do it."

"I don't know what a fellow with a nose like that can do," Hen said, and he said it as if he did mean it. "I didn't like his looks the first time I saw him, and I told you so. I said to keep away from him. And don't you try to tell me there isn't magic. You just remember Uncle Harris and the colored conjure woman!"

Well, I didn't know what he meant by his Uncle

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Harris and the conjure woman, but I guess Cawl did, for he looked uneasy.

"You be still!" he said. Then he turned to me. "Did he put magic on this boat?" he asked.

"How do I know?" I asked. "He was doing something with a feather and some sticks — that's all I know."

"Well, he's magicked us!" Cawl said all of a sudden, dropping his oars. "That's what he's done; he's put a spell on us."

He picked up one oar and felt the depth of the river and could not touch bottom on any side. So Hen stopped rowing. As soon as they both stopped rowing, the boat sagged around with the current and the pull on the trot-line was heavy. I looked up the river and saw Uncle Beeswax was rowing for us and was near enough to hear us. I yelled to him and waved my arms. Hen and Cawl had seen him, too. They made a last effort and took up their oars and rowed hard, but it was no use. Uncle Beeswax bore down on us and came alongside and grasped the gunwale of our skiff. The Romèrs stopped rowing, too, and that put the full weight of both skiffs, with the whole current behind them, on the trot-line and she parted as easy as you would break a rotten thread.

"What's the matter?" Uncle Beeswax asked.

The skiffs were floating down-river as easy as you please.

"Nothing," Jibby said. "These Romers wanted

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to come along and the skiff did not want them to."

"Neither do I; I don't like 'em, hoof nor hide," said Uncle Beeswax, who was plain-spoken enough when he wanted to be.

"Wampus and Tad and Skippy are waiting by the sycamore," Jibby said. "Maybe you'd better go on and get the grapes, Uncle Beeswax, and we'll see if we can row this skiff home. It may be willing to go across the river one way if it isn't willing to go the other."

The two Romers scowled a lot at this, but they took to the oars. They did not bother to row us back to our mud cove. They rowed across the easiest way, and that landed us down near the end of Birch Island, and they got out there. They did not say a word. As long as we could see them, as we rowed back across the river to the sycamore tree, they were standing there talking to each other — trying to make up their minds whether they believed in magic or not, I guess.

Well, Uncle Beeswax got his wild grapes and, after we got home, Jibby reeled in his trot-line. He had lost most of his hooks, but he did not mind that; he had kept the Romers from doing Uncle Beeswax out of his grapes.

"Jibby," Wampus asked, when I had told him and Skippy and Tad about the screw eyes and the trot-line and all, "how on earth did you ever think of putting the screw eyes in the keel of the skiff and running the trot-line through them?"

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“Well, I’ll explain it,” Jibby Jones said. “I had the screw eyes . . .”

“Yes.”

“And I had the trot-line . . .”

“Yes.”

“And I had the skiff . . .”

“Yes.”

“Well, what else could anybody do with a couple of screw eyes and a trot-line and a skiff?” Jibby asked. “I couldn’t think of anything else to do with them, so I did that. But I’m sorry for one thing.

“The feather,” Jibby said. “That crow feather was wasted. I couldn’t think of any way to use it. I tried, but I couldn’t.”

CHAPTER XVII

GRAINS OF SAND

FOR a while nothing much happened. It got along to the first of September, and all of us had to leave Birch Island and go back down to Riverbank, because we had to go to school. Old Uncle Beeswax came to the island a day or so before we left, and he said the Tough Customer and the Rat had given up digging for the land pirate's treasure.

Uncle Beeswax had hardly gone when we saw the Tough Customer's old shanty-boat floating down the river, past our island, and we knew they had given up hope and were going away. It did seem as if the Land Pirate's Treasure-Hunting and Exploration Company had had about as bad luck as the Tough Customer, too, and that our hunting had been wasted. We thought the treasure was a fake, and that there wasn't any, and that if there was we were all through with it. But we were not through with it yet, not by a long shot! If we had known the truth, we were just at the beginning of it.

A couple of days before we were to go down to town, all four of us were out there on the riverbank with the different things we had collected during the summer, making up our minds what we would keep and take home with us and what we would throw away.

I was there, and so were Skippy Root and Tad

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Willing and Wampus Smale, and we had all our curiosities spread out, when up came Jibby Jones. He stood there looking at our curiosities, with his hands behind his back, and he did look funny with his tortoise-shell spectacles and his big nose like the jib of a boat and a suit that needed to grow a lot before it was big enough for him.

"You've got a nice lot of things," he said.

And we had, too. You can find a lot of dandy curiosities up there on that island and around the river. We had chunks of rock from the ripraps with fossils in them, and carnelians from the levee, and turtle shells without the turtles in them, and roots that looked like snakes or people, and about six kinds of mussel shells, and some birds' eggs — we had a whole lot of dandy things. It looked like about a ton when we had them all spread out before us. They were fine for our collections.

"Where are yours?" Wampus asked Jibby.

Jibby had had some bully news to tell us a couple of days before. His folks were going to stay in Riverbank all winter, because Jibby's father was writing a book or something.

"If you haven't got any shells and rocks and things," Tad said to Jibby, "you'd better get them now. Maybe you'll go away in the spring, and maybe this is your last chance to get them. There is plenty of time yet."

"Thank you," Jibby said, "but I don't want to get any."

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"Don't you collect anything?" Skippy asked. "I thought everybody had a collection of some kind."

"Oh, yes!" Jibby said. "I do collect. I have a collection. But I don't collect big things any more. My father put a stop to it years ago."

"What were you collecting then?" Wampus asked.

"Hides," Jibby said, as serious as an owl. "I had a white mouse once and it died, so I saved the hide, and I thought it would be nice to collect hides — to get a collection of all the kinds of hides in the world."

"Say!" Skippy said. "That would be bully, wouldn't it? Why wouldn't your father let you collect them?"

"Well, we were in Egypt then," said Jibby Jones, "and the next hide I collected was one a hunter gave me. It was a hippopotamus hide and it needed an ox cart with four oxen to haul it. When it came to our tent I was greatly pleased, and I told father I knew where there was a crocodile hide a boy would trade me if I could get something to trade for it. It weighed about one hundred pounds. And I knew an old Arab that had a sick camel, and he said I could have the camel's hide if the camel died, only I would have to skin the camel — he was too busy. So I asked father if he would help me skin the camel."

"And wouldn't he?" asked Wampus.

"No," said Jibby Jones. "Father put his foot down. He said I could not collect hides. We often

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traveled with only one suitcase, because he was an author and had to be in a hurry, and he said that if my collection amounted to much, and I got an elephant hide and a rhinoceros hide and, maybe, a giraffe hide and a buffalo hide, and added them to my mouse hide and my hippopotamus hide, there wouldn't be room in the suitcase for his toothbrush. So I began to collect something else."

"What are you collecting now?" asked Skippy, and we all listened for the answer, because, if Jibby Jones was collecting anything, we did not know it.

"Sand," Jibby said. "I rowed over to the sand bar this morning and got eight grains of sand to add to my collection."

Well, we just all lay back and yelled. It was about the funniest thing we ever thought of — almost six feet of Jibby Jones going all the way over to the sand bar on the other side of the river with his spectacles and everything, to get eight grains of sand!

Jibby Jones looked at us awhile, sort of smiling as if he could not quite see what we were laughing at, and then he said:

"But, of course, I don't always get eight grains; mostly I only get one or two grains. I got eight grains because this is the best summer I ever had in my life and I want to remember it forever. I got eight grains of Mississippi River sand so that if any got lost I would still have enough to remember you boys by."

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“And is that all you are collecting?” Wampus asked.

“Yes,” Jibby Jones said. “Father don’t like me to collect bulky things, and I thought grains of sand were about as small as anything could be, so I collect them.”

Well, that is how Jibby Jones was. He looked silly, with his nose like a jib and his serious look, but there was always some good sense in what he said and did. When you come to think of it a grain of sand is just about the smallest thing there is.

Grains of sand did seem queer things to collect, just the same, when you think that all you have to do is walk across a sand bar in low shoes and you get two shoes full in about a minute and find grains of sand in your bed for about a week. So we sort of teased Jibby Jones, and the end of it was that we all went into his father’s cottage to look at Jibby Jones’s collection.

Say! He brought out a little tin box just about as big as my hand, and opened it, and he brought out a magnifying-glass that was a dandy. That magnifying-glass made a pin look as big as a railway spike, almost. It made a grain of sand look almost as big as a diamond a lady wears in a ring. I guess we did open our eyes when Jibby Jones began to show us his collection of grains of sand.

In the little tin box were little squares of card, just about the size of postage stamps, and each grain of sand was glued to its card, with the place it

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came from and the date Jibby Jones got that grain of sand all written out on the little card. He had each little card wrapped in tissue paper, so that if the grain of sand came off the card it would not be lost.

The first specimen he let us see was a grain of sand from the seashore of the Atlantic Ocean, United States. Without the magnifying-glass you could not see it at all, but when we looked through the glass at it we all said, "Oh, boy!" It was like a drop of moonlight shut up in a clear stone. It did not sparkle; it glowed. Then he showed us one from the Pacific Ocean that was like yellow sunlight.

Just about then we changed our minds about Jibby Jones having a fool sort of collection. He had a grain of sand from every place he had been. He had one from the Nile, and one from the edge of the Sahara Desert, and one from the River Jordan, and two from the St. Lawrence and hundreds more.

"This one is from the San Gabriel River in California," Jibby Jones said, when he showed us one grain. "It isn't very odd, but it was got in a queer way. Father wouldn't stop to let me get a grain of sand out of that river, because we were just going by on an interurban trolley car, so I thought I would get a grain of sand, anyway. I chewed some gum and fastened it to a string, and when we went over the bridge I stood on the end of the car and let the gum drag in the sand. It caught a lot of grains."

Jibby Jones had about the bulliest collection I ever looked at.

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“It is just as good as a collection of mountains and caverns and all sorts of minerals would be, when you get used to it,” Jibby Jones said, “because that is what sand is — mountains and rocks that have broken down and been crushed and then rolled by the water until the sharp edges are worn smooth.”

He had some cards that had more than one grain of sand glued to them — fifty or a hundred grains.

“When I get specimens for places,” Jibby Jones said, “I keep only one grain of sand, because father didn’t want me to collect anything bulky, but these are for color, so I keep more grains.”

Well, I did not know there were so many kinds of sand in the whole world! Jibby Jones had black sand, and sand as red as blood, and sand as blue as indigo, and sand of almost every color you ever heard of, and then some colors you never did hear of. We were saying, “Oh, boy!” and, “My gimini crickets!” every minute, and, all at once, Skippy said:

“Say, Jibby, you haven’t any green sand!”

“Yes, I have,” Jibby said, and he showed us a card of green sand.

“I don’t mean that kind of green,” Skippy said. “I mean green that the light shows through; not solid green. I know where there is a kind of green you have not got. You know, fellows; that green sand in Murrell’s Run, down below town.”

“Sure! I know!” I said, as excited as if somebody

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had told me where there was a million dollars. "Out back of that old brick house, Skippy."

We all remembered it. We had found it one day when we were wading up the Run, and there was a lot of it. It was right in the bottom of the Run, and we all waded in it and dug our toes in it and said it was a queer kind of sand.

Jibby Jones straightened up and looked at me through his spectacles.

"Green sand?" he said in a queer way. "Green sand?"

"You bet!" I said. "And lots of it. And it's the only place anybody ever heard of green sand being, around here."

"In a creek?" Jibby asked.

"Yes; up in the hills below town," I said. "Only they don't call that creek a creek; they call it a 'run' — Murl's Run," I said, pronouncing it the way we always did.

"I'd like to have some of that green sand — for my collection," Jibby drawled.

"Well," I said, "we'll get you some; we know right where it is."

"I would rather get it myself," Jibby said. "I like my sand specimens when I get them myself."

So that was how, the first Saturday after school began, Jibby Jones went with us out toward the Run. We all wanted to get green sand for our collections of sand, because we had all four started in collecting sand. As soon as we got through looking at

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Jibby's collection, we went over to the sand bar to get some Mississippi River sand to start our collections. Only we didn't get just one grain apiece; we got about a peck apiece. We thought maybe we could exchange grains of Mississippi River sand with boys in California and other places. We got enough sand to exchange with about a million boys, and there was plenty left in the river, too.

Going to Murrell's Run to get the green sand we went out the road past the cemetery for about five miles, and just before we got to the Run we came to a crossroads, where an old tumbledown brick house stands. We were going right on past when, all at once, Jibby Jones stopped short.

"Hello!" he said. "Look at that!"

We stopped and looked, but there wasn't anything to see. It was nothing but the old deserted brick farmhouse at the crossing of the roads. It was a one-story house with an attic, and the roof was falling in. All the doors and windows were gone, and the barn behind the house was nothing but a pile of rotted wood, flat on the ground. Tall weeds, mostly gone to seed now, were everywhere. It looked as if nobody had lived in that house for a hundred years. There was one big horse-chestnut tree by the house and one dead tree in the corner, just where the roads crossed, and all the rest was tangled blackberry bushes.

"What do you see?" Wampus Smale asked. "I don't see anything."

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That old house had been there so long and we had seen it so often that we never thought anything about it. It was not even gloomy enough to look like a haunted house. We had played all over it, because Wampus Smale's father owned that piece of land and the new house that was up the road five hundred yards or so. But Jibby Jones stood in the road, sniffing the air and wiggling his nose.

"Do you smell money?" he asked.

We all sniffed then. I know how paper money smells, but I could not smell that smell. Neither could Wampus or Skippy or Tad. We said so.

"I don't mean paper money; I mean gold money," Jibby Jones said. "Can you smell gold money?"

"Pshaw, no!" Skippy said, but he sniffed at the air first. "Of course I can't. Nobody can smell gold money; it hasn't any smell."

"Neither can I," said Jibby Jones. "I have a good nose, but it can't smell gold. I just thought perhaps your noses could. If you can't smell anything that smells like gold money, can you see anything that looks like it?"

We all looked as hard as we could, but we did not see anything that looked like gold money, or like anything much of anything. So we said so.

Wampus laughed.

"He's fooling us," he said, and then he asked Jibby Jones: "What do you see?"

"I see that old dead tree in the corner," Jibby Jones said. "Do you know what kind of tree that is?"

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We were all pretty well interested by this time, so we went up to the tree and looked at it and felt of it, and Wampus put his pug nose up against it and smelled it. Maybe he thought he could smell the gold money. The tree was so old the bark was all off it, and it had been struck by lightning once or twice and the top was all gone. When we had looked it over, we did not know what to think. We thought maybe Jibby Jones thought it was some kind of tree that was worth a lot of money, the way black walnut was during the war. But I said:

"I know what kind of tree it was. It was a pine tree. And I know what kind of tree it is. It is a dead tree."

"Of course," Jibby Jones said, as solemn as ever; "but I don't mean that. I mean what other kind of tree it was."

"Well," Skippy said, "if you mean whether it was a short-leaf pine or a long-leaf pine, I give it up. I can't tell that by an old dead trunk like this."

"I don't mean that," Jibby Jones said. "Don't you see where the tree is?"

We began to get excited now.

"Right in the corner!" he said. "There's the house, and here is what must have been the doorway of the house, and right in the corner is this pine tree. Didn't you ever hear of John A. M'rell?"

"Ginger!" I cried. "Ginger!" For M'rell was the way Jibby Jones always pronounced the land pirate's name.

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"This tree was a signal pine," Jibby said, as serious as a judge. "The minute I saw it, I knew it was a pine tree, and the minute I saw it was in the corner, I knew it might be a John A. M'rell signal pine. Didn't anybody ever talk about hunting treasure here?"

We just looked at Jibby Jones and stared.

"No; nobody ever said anything about treasure up here," Tad said.

"Then we've got a chance — a great chance," Jibby Jones said, more excited than we ever saw him. "Maybe we can find ten thousand dollars, and maybe we can find a hundred thousand dollars. It just shows how ignorant people can be, even when things are right under their noses. Here is a fortune lying where anybody can put their hands on it, and they don't know it. My gracious! I thought you fellows said you knew all about the Mississippi River."

"Aw!" Wampus said. "What are you talking about the river for? This isn't the river; this is farmland."

"If you knew all about the river, you would know all about all parts of it," Jibby Jones said. "You would know about Arkansas and Mississippi and the things that happened there. You'd know that whenever there is a lone pine in the corner of a farm, it might be a M'rell tree. And you'd remember it whenever anybody talked about land pirate's treasure. You'd know that people down there have

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hunted and hunted for John A. M'rell's hidden money, and never found it. Of course, they didn't find it. Why? Because it's here. The minute I saw this tree, I knew this was where it was hidden."

"Yes, but —" Wampus began.

"How far is it from here to the river or to the slough, if there is a slough?"

"Of course there's a slough," I said. "There's Riverbank Slough. It's two or three miles from here."

"Yes, but —" Wampus said again.

"But what?" Jibby asked.

"But this isn't the place; this can't be the place," Wampus said. "The map said Greenland."

Jibby took off his hat and unpinned the map from inside the sweat-band, where he always carried it. He spread it out on his hand.

"'Land' or 'sand,'" he said. "It might be one or the other, the way it is scribbled. It's 'Greenland' or it's 'green sand,' just as you want to read it. And there wasn't any treasure at Greenland. Look here — where would the green sand be, according to this map?"

We leaned over the map and studied it a minute.

"Right there," said Tad, putting his finger on the very spot where the "X" mark was.

"All right!" Jibby said. "Here's your river, and here's your slough, and here's your creek, and here's your crossroads. And these criss-cross scribble marks stand for Riverbank. And here's your signal

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pine, and your house, and your green sand right where the 'X' mark is — and marked 'green sand' plain enough for anybody. And what would John A. M'rell's brother send as directions if he hid the money here, and John A. M'rell was a criminal and



likely to be hunted when he was coming for his treasure?"

"What would he say?" Tad asked.

"He would say, 'Come up the Mississippi River to Riverbank, Iowa. Only, you'd better not go there; they may be looking for you. So, when you come to the first slough below Riverbank, row up the slough until you come to a creek. You can sneak up that creek without much chance of anybody seeing you. So come along up the creek until you

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come to some green sand, about two or three miles back from the slough. And, when you come to the green sand, climb up the creek bank and you'll see a brick house, and a signal pine I planted. That's where I am.'"

"Gee!" I said, it was all so plain.

"How do you pronounce M-u-r-r-e-l-l?" Jibby Jones asked.

"Murl," I said.

"Well, that old negro Mose pronounced it M'rell," Jibby Jones said. "M'rell and Murl is all the same. One is the Southern way of saying it, and the other is the Northern way. And you say the name of this creek is Murl's Run. That's M'rell's Run — M-u-r-r-e-l-l's Run. This is the place!"

CHAPTER XVIII

PIRATE'S TREASURE

WELL, that all sounded reasonable enough. We were all standing under the old pine tree, and Wampus and Skippy and Tad and I started for the old house on a run, but Jibby just stood there by the tree.

"Come on!" we shouted. "Come on and search the house."

"You go," Jibby said. "I want to think this out first. I can think hidden treasure better when I'm here by the signal tree. I thought out about it being here, and I've got to think where it would be hidden."

He leaned up against the tree and stayed there. He was rubbing that big nose of his with his forefinger, but we did not watch him long; we piled into the house and began to hunt pirate's treasure with all our might.

We pounded on the walls and rummaged in every room, hunting for secret hiding-places, and everything had a different look to us. Nothing changes a place like thinking there is treasure hidden in it. We were all as busy as bees.

I was up in the attic, under the roof that was tumbling in, and Skippy and Tad were on the ground floor, pounding and poking, and Wampus was in the cellar that was under about half the

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house. The way we worked you might have thought the treasure was butter that might melt and run away if we did not find it soon enough. Wherever there was a loose brick we pried it out, and wherever there was a loose board we pried it up.

Now and then I looked through the broken roof, and there was Jibby Jones by the old pine tree, rubbing the side of his nose slowly with his finger and looking first one way and then another. Sometimes he would look at the sky, and then he would look far off into the distance, and then he would look at the house. Now and then he would shake his head, and once he took off his hat and hit himself three or four times on the head with his fist, as if he was trying to make his brains work better by joggling them. I would have laughed, but I could not waste the time, so I only grinned. He was a funny fellow.

I was poking around, doing my best to find a million dollars or so, and finding nothing but cobwebs and dust, when I heard Wampus shout in the cellar.

"Come down here quick," he shouted; "I've found something."

I slid down from the attic and Skippy and Tad were already piling down into the cellar. I went to a window and shouted to Jibby to come, but he only waved his hand.

"Wampus has found something in the cellar; come on!" I shouted; but Jibby only waved his hand

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again, although he heard me well enough, so I piled down into the cellar, too.

Wampus was showing Skippy and Tad a place in the cellar floor, and he was as excited as a kitten with a mouse.

"Listen to this and then to this," he was saying, and he thumped on the floor of the cellar in different places with his heel. The floor was just a dirt floor. In some places it was dry and dusty and in other places dry and hard, but wherever Wampus stamped his heel, except one, it sounded solid; in that one place, bigger around than a barrel, the floor gave a hollow sound.

"You've found it!" Skippy cried. "Call Jibby. He has a right to be here when we get the money. And we'll divide it into five parts; one for each of us."

So Tad went to fetch Jibby Jones. Do you think he would come? Not a bit. When Tad told him what we had found, Jibby just rubbed his nose a little slower.

"Go ahead and look there if you want to," he said to Tad, "but be careful you don't fall in and get drowned. I'm glad you found it, because it is a good sign, but I've got to think out where that treasure is."

That was all Tad could get out of him. When Tad came back to the cellar, we were all digging at the floor over the hollow-sounding place with our jack-knives, but Tad sent me up to see if I could get half

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a dozen shingles off the old roof that would be sound enough to dig with. I got eight or ten and took a look at Jibby Jones. He had not stirred.

Tad and Wampus and Skippy and I dug the dirt away, using the old shingles to dig with, and we came to boards. The boards were thick, but they were dry-rotted. We cleared away all the dirt that covered them and pulled up the boards. By this time it was getting dark, especially down there in the cellar. We looked down into that dark hole and we could not see anything. I threw a piece of dirt down and it sounded dry. I asked Tad and Wampus and Skippy for a match, but none of us had any, so I went out to ask Jibby Jones for one, if he had one.

"I can't figure it out," he said. "I've been thinking and thinking, but I can't find it."

"Find what?" I asked him.

"The hidden treasure," he said.

"What do you want to think for?" I asked him.

"That's no way to find it. The way to find things is to hunt for them."

"No, George," Jibby said. "No! That's not the way. That's not the way Columbus did. He thought it out first. He thought until he was sure the world was round, and then he knew that if he sailed west from Spain he would find India."

"But he didn't find India," I said.

"He found something almost as good," Jibby grinned.

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"But we've found the treasure hole already," I said. "Come on and help us down into it."

"No," Jibby said slowly. "No, George. I'm going to stay here and think where that treasure is hidden. I'll find it quicker that way."

"Then give me some matches," I said. "We've found the secret hole and we're going to see what is in it, treasure or no treasure."

Jibby gave me a box of safety matches.

"Get some dry grass and light it and throw it down before you go down yourself," he said. "There may be poison air down there. If there is, the air will put the grass out. If the grass burns, it is safe for you to go down. But you won't find anything. I'm glad you found the hole, because it is a cistern, and it used to have water in it. That's a good sign for us, because, if the cistern was put in the cellar, it means that the people in the house may have been afraid they would have to stand a siege sometime and did not want to have to surrender for lack of water. That looks like pirate business."

Wampus was shouting for me to hurry. I ran to the old house, and we did as Jibby had told me. The grass burned clear and bright, and Wampus and Tad held me by my arms and lowered me into the old cistern. It looked as if Jibby was right; there wasn't much down there but dust and flakes of rotted wood, but I lighted one twist of dried grass after another and scraped all over the bottom of that cistern. Tad and Wampus and Skippy were flat on the

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cellar floor, looking down and telling me what to do, but I had just made up my mind it was no use scraping around any longer when I scraped up a coin.

It was just one coin, and it was the only coin we found in that cistern, but it made me feel bully. We had found something, anyway.

The coin was a dollar, and it was as black as coal, the way silver gets when it isn't kept polished. I scraped and scraped, after that, but it was no use — that was all the treasure we found. The fellows pulled me out of the hole.

By this time it was plumb dark, and we lighted matches and looked at the dollar we had found. It was an old one, but not worn at all — it was as clean and sharp as the day it was made. Tad was looking at it, and all at once he kicked up and threw his cap on the cellar floor and jumped on it, and shouted like a crazy man.

"Oh, boy!" he yelled. "Oh, you boy, you!"

As soon as we had looked at the dollar and had seen what Tad had seen, we jumped and yelled, too. Then we piled out of the cellar and ran to where Jibby Jones was still standing by the old pine tree. We were all shouting and kicking up and yipping like mad, but Jibby, when we reached him, just sighed as if there was no more hope in the world.

"Oh, you Jibby!" I shouted. "What do you think we found?"

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Jibby shook his head. He was not interested at all.

"I can't think it out!" he said, drawling like he always does. "That John A. Murrell treasure ought to be somewhere, but I can't think where it is. He would send it here by a trusty messenger, and the man here would hide it. It would have to be hidden in a safe place, and in a place that John A. Murrell could find, even if the man here moved away and the house and barn burned and every one died. But I can't think where — "

"But what do you think we found?" we shouted. "We found it in the old cistern. Look, Jibby! An 1804 dollar! And as good as the day it was minted."

"That's nice," he said, careless-like, and he went on thinking.

"But it's an 1804 dollar, Jibby!" I yelled at him. "Don't you know what that means? It is worth a thousand dollars, maybe; it is the rarest of all the dollars. A thousand dollars! We'll sell it and divide the money."

I don't believe he heard a word. Did you ever hear of such a fellow? We had found an 1804 dollar, and we shouted it at him, and he took no more notice of us than if we had been four gnats buzzing around him. He was more interested in leaning up against an old pine tree, trying to think where some old land pirate might have hid some old treasure — if there ever was any treasure — than he was in a

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genuine 1804 dollar. And he looked so glum over it that I thought he was going to cry.

"Well, we've got to go home," he said. "It's dark now. I don't know what is the matter with this old head of mine. I thought it was good for something, but I guess not. I guess my brains have got glued together."

"But, say!" I said. "You did not really think you could stand here and think exactly where the treasure was buried, so we could walk right to it, did you?" I asked Jibby.

"Why, of course, I did!" Jibby Jones said. "That ought to be easy, oughtn't it? If this old head of mine wasn't off on a vacation or something, we would have had that treasure by now."

He said something about showing that old head of his that it couldn't behave that way with him, and he turned around and bumped his forehead against the old pine tree three or four times. At the last bump Jibby stood back and put his hand to his head.

"Solid!" he said. "Solid wood!"

"What? The tree?" Wampus asked.

"No, my head," Jibby laughed. Then he hit each of us with his fist, for fun and to show he was tickled. "I've found it!" he said. "I know where that treasure is."

"Where?" we all asked.

"In my head," he said, and he laughed again. "I won't tell you where else it is, because we'll need a

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spade to dig for it, and it is too dark now, and we can't come to-morrow, because it is Sunday. We'll come out and get it next week sometime. Did you say you had found something?"

We told him all over again, and he looked at the 1804 dollar by the light of a match and said it was genuine, and we all felt fine and bully. We hiked toward home at a good rate, talking and shouting, and all at once Jibby Jones stopped short.

"Pshaw!" he said. "We forgot something!"

"What?" I asked.

"We forgot what we went for; we did not get that green sand," Jibby said. "We'll have to get that the next time we come."

"After we dig up the treasure," Wampus said.

"No, before we do anything else," Jibby said. "Treasure is nothing but money, and I may have plenty of chances to get money in my life, but this may be the only green sand I ever have a chance to get. We'll get the sand first."

We had to agree to it. If Jibby knew where the land pirate's treasure was, he was the only one that did know, so we had to do what he planned.

"How much green sand are you going to get?" I asked him.

"One grain," Jibby said. "I need only one grain for my collection, so I'll get only one grain."

And that was exactly like Jibby Jones. He thought he knew where there was a pirate treasure worth, maybe, thousands of dollars, and he would

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put off getting it so that he could get one grain of sand. It looked foolish, but maybe it was the wisest way, after all. I guess it is. I guess the wisest thing is to make up your mind what you want, and then go for it, and keep on going for it until you get it.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TOUGH CUSTOMER APPEARS

It was on Saturday that we found the 1804 dollar in the dry well of the cellar of the old Murrell farmhouse. We knew that the dollar was worth a lot of money, and Jibby Jones said he thought it might be worth a thousand dollars, which would be two hundred dollars apiece for each of us.

"But that's nothing," Jibby Jones told us. "If that John A. Murrell's treasure is buried there, we may find a whole lot of money — perhaps thousands of dollars."

He said this while we were going back to Riverbank in the dark. The dollar was all we had found, although we had searched the whole of the old brick house, but Jibby Jones had not helped us hunt; he had stood by an old pine tree doing nothing but thinking. He said he had to think where the land pirate or his man would most likely hide the treasure. And Jibby Jones said he had thought of the place.

"I'll tell you," he said, as we went along toward home, "but you must not breathe a word of it. It won't do to let anybody know about the treasure or anything. The rush for the Klondike gold fields would be nothing beside the rush the people here in Riverbank would make for that treasure, if they knew there was a treasure."

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"That's right!" Wampus Smale said. "Everybody in town would pile out there and dig for it."

"Well, this is how I thought out where the treasure is," Jibby said, and we all crowded close to him so that he would not have to talk very loud. "I leaned up against that old pine tree and I tried to imagine I was old John A. Murrell, the land pirate. That's what you have to do if you want to get anywhere in this world — you've got to imagine things."

Well, we stopped and had an argument right there! That sounded to us like the most foolish thing anybody could say — that the way to get anywhere was to imagine something.

"I don't believe that," Skippy Root said. "I believe that the way to get anywhere is to start right out and go there, and I believe that the way to get anything is to start right after it and get it. It don't do any good for real folks to imagine anything at all; it may be all right for poets and story-writers to imagine things and then write them — that's their sort of business — but it is a waste of time for anybody else to go and imagine things."

"Is it?" Jibby Jones asked. "I didn't know that. I always thought it was the other way."

Well, that made us stop a little. Jibby Jones wasn't half such a fool as he looked, and we had found that out. At first we had sort of figured that he was a silly, because he was almost six feet tall and wore clothes that were mostly built for a five-foot boy, and because his shell-rimmed spectacles and

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big, thin nose made him look like some foolish kind of bird, but somehow even the silliest things he ever said turned out to be pretty good solid sense. So now Tad Willing said:

“What do you mean by you ‘always thought it was the other way,’ Jibby?”

“Why, I always thought that nobody ever really did anything worth while until he had imagined something about it,” Jibby said. “I always thought there was never a wagon until some man imagined there was an easier way of getting over the ground than walking over it. He imagined there might be some sort of wagon, and then he went to work and made one. If some one had not imagined that men might fly, there would never have been any airplanes.”

“Well, I guess that’s so, anyway,” Tad admitted.

“Of course it is so!” Jibby said. “The only way the world gets ahead at all is by imagination. You take the phonograph, for an example. How do you suppose anybody ever happened to think of making a phonograph?”

“Why —” Wampus Smale began, and then he stopped.

It was as plain as day that nobody could sit down to invent a machine that would talk like a man and sing like a bird and play tunes like a band without first imagining such a machine.

“*There* you are!” Jibby said. “A phonograph is

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ninety-nine parts imagination and only one part solid stuff. Now, listen!"

Jibby Jones held the 1804 dollar between his finger and thumb and hit it with his finger nail. It tinkled like a little silver bell.

"You heard that, didn't you?" he asked. "All five of us heard it. That means ten ears heard it. Well, for millions of years millions of ears were hearing millions of sounds before anybody sat down and wondered what a sound was and why an ear could hear it, and maybe it was thousands of years more before some man imagined his ears heard the sound because waves came through the air and hit his eardrums. So then he went to work and proved it — he proved that if you hit a drum it makes one kind of sound waves, and if you scrape a fiddle it makes another kind, and if a bird sings it makes another kind. He proved that sound is vibration."

"Sure! I know that!" Wampus said, sort of scornful.

"Edison knew it, too," Jibby Jones said, "and he sat down one day, and took all he knew about sound and sound waves and vibrations, and wondered why a man couldn't make any kind of noise or music or even human speech, if he could scrape a needle on something and make it vibrate and start the right kind of waves. He had imagination, Edison did. He imagined some sort of machine that would take a man's voice and make it jiggle a needle so that the needle would make waves on tinfoil or something.

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Tinfoil was what he used first. He talked his voice into a funnel so that its waves jiggled the needle and made waves on the tinfoil, and then he made the needle follow the waves in the tinfoil — little scratches, they were — and, sure enough, he heard his own voice talking back what he had just talked into the machine. And then he imagined a better machine with wax cylinders instead of tinfoil, and then — well, that's how your phonograph got invented. Edison is ninety-nine parts imagination."

"Well, I guess that's so," said Tad.

"More than half of the great inventions," Jibby Jones said, "were made useful by some man who did not do the first inventing of them. Alexander Bell made the telephone so it was useful, but another man had done some telephone inventing first. The one man had enough imagination to imagine a toy telephone, but Alexander Bell had the imagination to imagine a telephone that would be useful to all the world."

"All right," Wampus said. "That's so, I guess, but you're talking about great men now, Jibby. What good does imagination do us?"

"That's what I was trying to tell you," Jibby drawled in his slow way. "I saw, right away, that a smart land pirate like John A. Murrell would not hide his money where you and George and Tad and Skippy would look for it. A man that could imagine a band of over one thousand men all pirating together would not hide his treasure just anywhere.

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He would imagine a lot of things. He would imagine he might be caught and put in jail and kept there fifty years, maybe, and he would imagine some place where his treasure could be hid where he could find it in a minute, but no one else would think of looking for it."

"That sounds like good sense," Skippy said.

"Of course it does!" said Jibby Jones. "You make fun of imagination, but how did we first come to think of treasure being hid out there at that old farm?"

"Why, you saw that old pine tree in the corner of the lot," Wampus said.

"Yes, and I imagined it might be one of John A. Murrell's signal pines, such as he had planted in the corners of yards and farms all through Tennessee and Mississippi and Arkansas. I imagined that, didn't I? There's nothing so useful as imagination. So I stood by that old dead pine and imagined I was John A. Murrell, with a lot of stolen treasure, and that I was liable to be caught and kept in jail fifty years or more after the treasure was hidden. I knew right away that you would not find it in the house, because that would be exactly the first place any of the Murrell gang would look for it, if he wanted to cheat John A. Murrell while Murrell was in jail. Isn't that so?"

We had to admit that it was; the house was the first place we had looked, anyway.

"So I imagined I was John A. Murrell, away

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down in Arkansas, and that I wanted a true friend to hide my money here in Iowa, so that I could find it years later, even if the true friend was dead or had moved away, and even if the house had burned down and disappeared. I imagined I was John A. Murrell, getting out of jail and coming up the Mississippi until I came to the mouth of the creek you said was Murrell's Run. Then I remembered the green sand you said was in the bottom of Murrell's Run near the farmhouse. So I imagined I came up the creek until I came to the green sand, and that was a sign to me to climb out of the creek and look for — what?"

"The signal pine, of course," said Skippy Root.

"Certainly," said Jibby Jones. "So I imagined I was standing there looking at the signal pine. Then I knew there was just one place where the treasure could be — it would be planted right at the root of the old signal pine. For that is what John A. Murrell would order: 'Plant a signal pine at the corner of the farm, and bury the treasure at the foot of the pine.' Even if John A. Murrell was dying, he could tell exactly where the treasure was, in a few words, and nobody could miss it. He might be in Asia, and he could send a man directly to it. 'Go up the Mississippi until you come to a creek about five miles below Riverbank, Iowa. Go up the creek until you come to green sand. Climb the bank on your left and find a signal pine in the corner of a farm. Dig at the foot of the pine.' "

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Well, this might be wonderful imagination or it might be plumb nonsense, but out there in the dark, walking home past the cemetery, it sounded great to us. We all told Jibby he was a wonder, and he said he was not, that it was just ordinary common sense.

"I don't say the treasure is there," he said modestly, "because some one may have dug it up, but if it is anywhere it is there, at the foot of that signal pine tree."

"But I'll say you used some imagination," said Skippy.

"Oh, no!" Jibby said, still more modest. "That wasn't much. I don't call that much of anything. But maybe I can show you, sometime, what imagination is worth."

So then we went on talking about the treasure and the 1804 dollar, and how we must not talk about it outside, but Jibby Jones said it would be all right to tell our fathers and mothers about it, because they would not tell. We let Wampus Smale take the 1804 dollar home, because he said his mother had a silver wash that she used to dip silver things in to make them as bright as new. The 1804 dollar was not worn smooth — it was as sharp as if it had just come from the mint — but it was as black as iron, and we thought it would be a good thing to have it brightened.

We did not see how we could get out to the old Murrell farm to dig the treasure — if it was there —

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before the next Saturday, so we decided on that, and then we went home.

The sad thing happened the next morning — Sunday morning — when we were all going to Sunday school together, and the Tough Customer was to blame. He lost the 1804 dollar for us.

When Wampus got home that Saturday night, his folks were at supper and his father made him go and wash up and come right to the table, so he did. When he sat down at the table his father and mother were talking about Mary — their hired girl — and the man she had in the kitchen just then.

“Well,” Wampus’s mother was saying, “I did not like the looks of him, but Mary said he was her cousin, so I said she could give him some supper in the kitchen.”

“That’s all right, of course, for this one time,” Wampus’s father said then, “but don’t let the fellow hang around here. I think he is a tough customer, judging by his looks. He has a bad eye. If he had two eyes, I would say he had two bad eyes, but the one eye he has is bad enough to satisfy any one.”

“I know,” Wampus’s mother said, “but I felt rather sorry for him because he has only one leg.”

Wampus had been waiting for a chance to talk, because he was so eager to tell about the 1804 dollar and the treasure, and now he had the chance, and he lit into it. He handed the dollar to his father and went on to tell him about all of us finding it, and about Jibby Jones guessing there was hidden treas-

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ure, but he would not say where we had found the dollar nor where the treasure was. He was too smart for that, because just then Mary came in with the supper she had been keeping hot in the oven for him. She stood around and listened while they talked about the treasure and the 1804 dollar and how valuable it was, but Wampus did not think anything about that, because Mary had been their hired girl for a couple of years.

"And how much treasure does your Jibby Jones think you will find?" Mr. Smale asked Wampus.

"He don't know," Wampus said. "Maybe thousands of dollars. Maybe none. But, anyway, we've got this dollar and it ought to be worth almost a thousand dollars, Jibby says."

They went on talking it over, and Mr. Smale was sort of amused and did not believe in the treasure much, but Wampus wouldn't say where we had been, or when we were going to dig for the treasure, and Mary went into the kitchen. So that was all of that.

Then Wampus told his father and mother that the one-legged man Mary had in the kitchen was the Tough Customer that Orph Cadwallader had run off the island, but neither Mr. Smale nor Mrs. Smale seemed to think much about it. All Mr. Smale said was: "He had no business on the island, but I suppose it is all right for Mary to feed a cousin once in a while. How about it, mother?"

"It has to be," Mrs. Smale said; "it is so hard to get help these days."

CHAPTER XX

ORLANDO

THE next morning we were on our way to Sunday school. I waited for Jibby and we picked up Wampus and Tad and Skippy, and we all had a good look at the 1804 dollar, because Wampus's mother had dipped it and it was bright and beautiful. We passed it around and talked about it, and then we noticed the Tough Customer ahead of us. He did look tough, too, with his one peg-leg, and he swayed on his feet like a sailor — or on his one foot and one peg — and when he got to the corner he stood and waited.

We had no use for him, and we did not want to talk to him, but when we came up to the Tough Customer he said "Howdy!" to us.

"Are you the boys that have that 1804 dollar?" he asked.

"Yes, we are," I said.

"My cousin told me about it," he said. "She saw it in the dining-room last night. I'd like to have a look at it."

Wampus had the dollar. I wished the man had not stopped us; there was something about his stopping us that I did not like. To see him smiling and trying to be pleasant and nice to us gave me the shivers,

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“I know a man that wants to buy an 1804 dollar, boys,” he said. “I met him in St. Louis, only a couple of months ago, and he told me he would give more than the market price for one. ‘You travel about the world a lot,’ he said to me, ‘and you’re likely to run across one any day. If you do,’ he says, ‘let me know. Only,’ he says, ‘don’t try to fool me with no counterfeits, because I’m too wise for that.’ So he showed me how to tell the difference between a real one and a counterfeit one. I ain’t sure, but from what Mary told me I reckon you’ve got hold of a counterfeit one that some one threw away because it wasn’t worth a red cent. Let me see it; I can tell you in a minute.”

So Wampus pulled our dollar out of his pocket and handed it to the Tough Customer. I had half an idea he meant to try to run away with it, and I got ready to make a dive for his wooden leg if he tried anything of that kind, but he did not. He just stood there, turning the dollar over and over between his two fingers and his thumb. I guess Jibby Jones must have thought what I thought, for he sort of edged to the far side of the Tough Customer.

“Well, I declare!” the Tough Customer said. “I would not have thought it! It is a genuine — ”

And just then he dropped the dollar! It slipped between his thumb and his two fingers and I made a dive for it, and so did Wampus, but so did the Tough Customer, too, and we all three came to-

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gether ker-plunk, and the dollar jangled on the grating and disappeared.

For, you see, we were standing right over an iron grating that covered an opening into the Raccoon Creek sewer. The dollar went through the grating and into the sewer, and that was the last we ever saw of that dollar. The Tough Customer swore. He swore something that was awful to hear, and he got down on his knees and peered into the sewer, and then he moaned and groaned and said we would never forgive him, and he was about right about that — we never did.

I don't know how long we stood there, but a crowd began to gather — folks going to Sunday school, and men with the Sunday papers under their arms, and a couple of automobiles, and so we boys slipped away and left the Tough Customer explaining that he had dropped a dollar into the sewer, but he did not say it was an 1804 dollar. The folks laughed and said it was a gone dollar.

I guess Sunday school did not do us much good that day. On the way home we talked about the chances of ever getting the 1804 dollar back — four of us did — but Jibby did not talk. We knew it was hopeless. The Raccoon Creek sewer is the main sewer in Riverbank and is really the whole of Raccoon Creek cemented in and roofed over, and there was less chance of getting that dollar out of it than of finding a pinhead fired out of a rifle into the Desert of Sahara. The water was always two or three feet

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deep and the mud a foot or two more. We decided there was no hope, and so Wampus said:

"Well, it is gone; the next thing is to get the treasure. Maybe there will be a couple more 1804 dollars in the treasure. We'll get the treasure Saturday."

"Maybe!" Jibby Jones said. "I've got to do some thinking first, and I've got to find a good thinking place before I do any more thinking."

We tried to talk him out of it, but it was no use. He said he must think. Finally, he did say he expected he could do all the thinking necessary before Saturday, if he found a first-class place to think in. That sounded foolish to me.

"Can't you think in one place as well as in another?" I asked him.

"No," he said, "of course not! There's a best place for everything, and there ought to be a best place to think in, too. For the kind of thinking I have to do I need a first-class thinking place."

So that afternoon we walked around looking for a thinking place for Jibby Jones. We tried about thirty different places, and Jibby would sit down and try them, but they did not satisfy him. Then we would try another, and finally he said Wampus Smale's woodshed would do; he said it was as good as any man needed to think in.

"It is warm and clean and smells of sawdust and damp bark," Jibby said, "and the boards of the

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walls are wide enough for the air to ventilate through. I guess I can think first-rate here."

It sounded foolish to us, but you can never tell when Jibby is being foolish and when he is not, but mostly he is not, so we all sat down and tried to think. We changed from one seat to another, and when Jibby sat with his back to the wall that is right close to the alley he said that was the best place of all for high-grade thinking, and that we would come there every afternoon and do our thinking. So, every afternoon, after school, we went there and Jibby sat and thought.

But the rest of us mostly talked. Jibby said he did not mind our talking, and sometimes he joined in. We talked about the treasure, and about old John A. Murrell, and so on, and we planned to go out and get the treasure on Saturday, but whenever any of us came near saying where the treasure was hidden, Jibby said "Hush!" and shut us up.

It came along to Friday afternoon, and we had planned pretty much everything. Wampus was to take a spade, and Skippy was to get a pickaxe, and Tad was to take an axe. Jibby told me to have a length of rope ready.

"And I'll have my mother put up lunch for us," he said, "for we may spend the whole day. We will all meet at my house at nine o'clock to-morrow morning. We'll need a big lunch, because if we dig a lot we'll be mighty hungry — "

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He stopped short.

“Pshaw!” he said. “I forgot to feed Orlando!”

“Orlando?” I asked, for this was the first time I had heard of any Orlando. “Who’s Orlando?”

Jibby looked at me.

“My goodness!” he exclaimed. “Didn’t I ever tell you about Orlando? That’s because we’ve had Orlando so long I never think much of him, I guess. Orlando is my father’s pet skunk.”

We did not say anything. Mr. Jones is an author, and an author is liable to have almost any kind of pet. They are funny folks, mostly, I guess.

“My father caught Orlando when Orlando was no bigger than a cat’s kitten,” Jibby Jones went on. “He caught Orlando in Pike County, Pennsylvania, and he raised Orlando on a bottle, and Orlando is as affectionate as a kitten. If you catch a skunk young and treat it right, it is the most affectionate pet you can have, and it makes the best kind of watchdog — if you can call a skunk a dog. We keep Orlando in the cellar, and I have to feed Orlando when my father does not. And father is away to-day and I forgot to feed Orlando. I’ll have to go home now and feed Orlando.”

“Gee whiz!” Skippy said. “That’s a funny kind of pet. Don’t it ever — well, you know! — perfumery?”

“Oh, no, indeed!” Jibby drawled. “That’s where you do Orlando a great wrong, Skippy. If a skunk is fond of you, and knows you, it never bothers you

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that way. It is only when a skunk is hostile to you that it bothers you that way."

"Has — has Orlando ever been hostile?" Wampus asked.

"Yes, once," Jibby said. "When we were in Kalamazoo, Michigan, my father was sick and a one-legged barber named Horace L. Spurling used to come to the house to shave father. We had a peach tree in the side yard and the peaches were ripe, and one evening Horace L. Spurling thought he would steal a couple of peaches, and he climbed the fence and sneaked up to the tree, and Orlando was taking a nap under the tree, and Horace L. Spurling stepped on Orlando's tail. For three days Horace L. Spurling was unconscious, and we had to bury his clothes six feet deep and cut down the peach tree and burn it, and move into another house two miles away. Ever since then Orlando has been hostile to one-legged men because Horace L. Spurling had one leg. I don't think Orlando is hostile to men with two legs or to women, but he might be hostile to the Legless Lady in the circus. But I must go home now and feed Orlando."

"What do you do with Orlando when you are traveling?" Tad asked.

"We carry him in a green cloth bag, so he can't see whether there are any one-legs or not," Jibby said.

Then we all went home. I went with Jibby, because we live near each other.

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“George,” he said, as we went along, “that Tough Customer was out behind Wampus’s woodshed, listening. I thought he would be. I picked out that woodshed on purpose, because the Tough Customer could hear us through the cracks in it. And we have no skunk at our house. We’ve got a black-and-white cat we call Orlando. But imagination is a great thing, George. I said it was. I imagined, for a while, that Orlando was a skunk.”

I laughed. I thought Jibby was trying to be funny.

“I didn’t want to bother Wampus and Tad and Skippy, George,” Jibby said, “but we’ve got some work to do to-night. Come to my house right after supper and bring a lantern. I have one, too.”

He would not say any more, so after supper I took my lantern and went to Jibby’s. We walked out to the old Murrell farm, and when we got there we went into the tumbledown old brick farmhouse and down into the cellar, where the dry well was. The old rotten boards were just as we had left them last Saturday, and Jibby Jones put them over the well, fixing them carefully, and sprinkled dry dirt all over them.

“I saw the natives make an elephant trap in India this way once,” he said. “I saw them catch a wild elephant. He was a tough customer.”

“You don’t think you’ll catch an elephant here, do you?” I asked him.

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"No," Jibby said, "but I expect I may catch a Tough Customer."

So then we went home. The next morning we were all on hand at nine o'clock at Jibby's, and we started for the Murrell farm. We hiked along at a good rate, saying "hep! hep! hep!" to keep in step, or singing something to keep step by. We had all the things Jibby had told us to bring, and he had a big market-basket with a lid.

"It is all right," Jibby whispered to me once. "The Tough Customer is following us."

About half a mile this side of the Murrell farm, Jibby said he was tired and sat down by the side of the road to rest. There was a long osage orange hedge there, and we sat with it behind us.

"Now, listen," he said, when we were seated. "Before we get to work to dig that treasure, we'll go to the Run and get some of that green sand for my collection. It won't take half an hour; we'll have plenty of time. Nobody is going to guess that the treasure is under the bottom of the old dry well in the cellar of the old brick farmhouse at the cross-roads where the broken, dead pine tree is."

"But — " said Wampus.

"You be still!" Jibby said. "Sometimes I think you talk too much. I'm hungry. I'm going to eat something."

He opened the basket and gave us each a sandwich, and they did taste good! We sat there eating.

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"But you said the treasure was under the pine tree," Wampus said then.

"Yes, I said that, and that is where it is," Jibby Jones said then, "but just now the Tough Customer was behind the hedge here listening, and I wanted him to think it was in the well in the cellar. But now we can talk; he is not here now. Look up the road."

Sure enough, there was the Tough Customer, hobbling along in a great hurry, trying to keep out of sight and going toward the old Murrell place.

"Let him get in the house," Jibby said, and then he opened the lid of his market-basket again and took out a green felt bag. He loosened the strings and a cat stuck its black-and-white head out of the bag.

"Good old Orlando!" Jibby said, and stroked the cat's head.

He handed the bag to Wampus.

"You carry the cat, Wampus," he said, "and when I ask for it you hand it to me. Now, come on, and let's hurry."

We did. We started up the road at a good clip, and when we reached the old Murrell place the Tough Customer was not in sight, but when we had stolen up to the house we heard a clatter of old boards and a yell, and we all piled into the cellar. The Tough Customer had stepped on the boards that covered Jibby's elephant trap and they had tipped and fallen into the dry well and the Tough

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Customer had gone with them. He was swearing and jumping and trying to get out of the well, but it was too deep for him to get out without some one to pull him out or boost him out. When he saw us, he let loose all the language he could think of, and he told us all the things he would do to us if he ever got out of that hole.

Jibby stood and looked down at him.

"Wampus," Jibby said, in his slow, drawling way, "hand me Orlando."

Wampus handed Jibby Jones the green felt bag.

"Now, you boys had better get out of the cellar and, maybe, out of the house," Jibby said, "because it may not be very pleasant when I put Orlando down the well. Orlando is hostile to men with wooden legs. Orlando don't like wooden legs."

"Look here!" the Tough Customer begged, changing his tone in an instant. "You're not going to dump that cussed animal down here, are you? Please don't. Don't you be so cruel to a feller that never did anybody any harm. Please! I'd rather be licked a dozen times than have that animal — "

"Hurry, boys!" Jibby said. "There's going to be a grand time here. I shouldn't wonder if Orlando bit this man, too, besides other happenings."

Jibby opened the neck of the bag.

"Wooden legs, Orlando!" he said, when the cat put its head out.

"Look here!" the Tough Customer whined from down in the well. "Don't do it! Don't let that



SKIPPY AND I THREW AN END OF THE ROPE INTO THE WELL AND PULLED THE TOUGH CUSTOMER OUT

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animal loose on me. I'll give you — I'll give you anything you say."

"Well, I don't know," Jibby said. "I sort of hate to miss the fun. But, I don't know. I might be willing to dicker. How about a dollar? How about an 1804 dollar?"

"I haven't got — " the man began.

"Scoot, boys!" Jibby shouted. "Here she goes! Sic him, Orlando!"

"I'll give it! I'll give it!" the Tough Customer yelled, and — plunk! — on the hard dirt at Jibby's feet the 1804 dollar fell. Jibby picked it up and looked at it. It was our dollar, right enough.

Jibby pushed the cat's head back into the green bag and tied the strings and put the bag in the basket. Then he made Wampus with his spade and Tad with his axe stand ready to take care of the Tough Customer if he tried any funny tricks, and Skippy and I threw an end of the rope into the well and pulled the Tough Customer out. He did not wait to talk; he gave one look at the basket and scooted out of that cellar.

We piled out after him, because we did not want him throwing any bricks or rocks down on us, but we saw him hobbling down the road as fast as his wooden leg would carry him, and we whooped and laughed and patted Jibby Jones on the back.

"That's nothing!" he said. "I saw a man palm a dollar once in a sleight-of-hand show, so I had some experience that way. And I just imagined Orlando

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was a skunk for this afternoon only. I sort of imagined that Tough Customer was not going to let an 1804 dollar drop down a sewer. It looked too smart, to have him standing right over that grating. So that's all there is to it — experience and imagination."

And that's so. They do make a mighty good team. When you have Experience and Imagination hitched up together, you can do almost anything. I was thinking that when Orlando, in the bag, gave a yowl.

Jibby Jones grinned.

"Orlando wants to go home," he said. And he took the bag out of the basket and took the cat out of the bag. He dropped Orlando on the ground, and the cat started for home at a good trot. The cat took to the road, and presently the Tough Customer looked back, and he saw Orlando trotting along toward him. He gave one yell and dived over a fence, and the last we saw of him that day was while he was scooting across a ploughed field as hard as he could scoot.

CHAPTER XXI

WINGED ENEMIES

It must have been about half-past ten or eleven o'clock in the morning by the time we got rid of the Tough Customer that had come to the old Murrell farm to get the land pirate's buried treasure before we could get it. We stood there by the old brick house laughing and shouting while Jibby Jones's cat Orlando chased the Tough Customer off the road.

When we saw the Tough Customer vanish over a rise of ground, the rest of our work of getting the buried treasure — if there was any — seemed as simple as opening a pie to pull out a plum. We had the rest of the morning and all afternoon and part of the evening to work in, and Jibby Jones had figured out that the buried treasure must be under the old signal pine tree in the corner, near where the two roads crossed.

“Come on!” I said. “Now we can get it; there's not a thing that can stop us.”

And that was how it looked to me. There we were, Jibby Jones and Wampus Smale and Tad Willing and Skippy Root and myself, and we had enough lunch to last all day, and we had a spade and a pick and an axe and a long rope. It did look as if getting that treasure would be the easiest thing in the

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world. I felt as if my hands were already scooping up gold money and silver money and letting it drip through my fingers.

I can't hardly tell you how simple it seemed to get that buried treasure, and how easy. Just try yourself to see how easy it looked to me. Just behind us was the rotted old brick farmhouse where Jibby said the treasure was not hidden. Over yonder was the dead pine tree in the corner of the lot — the tree Jibby Jones said was the signal pine, under which the pirate's treasure was probably buried — and between was nothing but a few rods of ground with weeds and tall grass on it. And we had the digging tools. All we had to do was walk across to the dead pine tree and dig. So I said so.

"Come on!" I said. "Let's hurry and get that treasure before anybody else comes along to bother us."

But Jibby Jones did not pick up the lunch-basket or make any move toward the dead pine tree. He stood and smoothed his nose with his forefinger.

"No," he said, "let's take a swim first. Let's go to the creek and find a swimming-pool and take a swim."

"We can't," I said. "There never was a swimming-pool in Murrell's Run, and there isn't one now."

"I don't know," Jibby said. "Up in the Catskill Mountains there are streams, and sometimes there is no pool in a place, and the next year there is one."

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You can't always tell, George. I'm lucky about pools; when I want to swim there usually is one."

"Well, you won't find one on Murrell's Run," I said. But I ought to have known better; a fellow never ought to say what Jibby Jones will find or won't find.

"Come on! Let's dig for the treasure," Skippy Root said. "You act as if you were afraid to, Jibby."

Jibby did not answer this directly. He rubbed his nose and looked at Wampus Smale.

"Your father owns this land, don't he, Wampus?" he asked.

"Yes, he owns all of it," Wampus said.

"And who lives in the new farmhouse at the other end of the farm?" Jibby asked.

"Why, Bill Catlin," Wampus said. "He rents from father. What has that got to do with it?"

Jibby rubbed his nose again, and I thought I saw him grin.

"What kind of lights does he use?" Jibby asked.

"What do you mean?" Wampus asked. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"I mean lights," said Jibby Jones. "Lights for the evening, when he is sitting at a table reading the Farmers' Almanac or something. You know what lights are, don't you, Wampus? The Romans had oil lights, and my great-great-grandmother had whale-oil lights, and in New England they once used tallow dips. Does Bill Catlin use kerosene lamps or electric light or gas light?"

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"What are you trying to do, tease me?" Wampus asked. "Bill Catlin uses kerosene lamps, of course. There is no gas out here, and there are no electric lights this far out."

"All right," Jibby said. "That's good. That's fine. Is Bill Catlin a cross fellow, or is he a pleasant fellow?"

"Oh, come on!" Wampus said, disgusted. "Let's dig; what's the use of trying to be funny?"

"All right," Jibby said. "I don't pretend to be the one leader of this band of treasure-hunters. Go on and dig, if you want to. I'm not ready to dig yet; I'm going down to the Run and get a specimen of the green sand you said was there. I'm more interested in getting a specimen of that sand for my collection than I am in buried treasure just now."

Sure enough, he started off toward where the rim of trees showed where Murrell's Run was. It was just what you might expect Jibby Jones to do, right when the buried treasure was in our hands, almost. Tad called to him.

"Jibby!" he called. "Come back here!"

Anybody else that acted that way we would have let go, but Jibby Jones was different. He looked like a ninny, with his long thin nose and his high-water pants and his spectacles, but he had fooled us more than once that way. It was when he said or did the biggest fool things — or what seemed like the biggest fool things to us — that you had to stop and think the hardest, because Jibby Jones always

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had something important in his mind then. So, when Tad called to him, Jibby came back.

"You must excuse me if I seem rude," he said, "but I really cannot dig for treasure until Wampus tells me whether Bill Catlin is a pleasant fellow or a cross fellow."

"Why?" I asked.

Jibby looked up at the air and down at the grass.

"My father has told me many, many times that the way to keep out of trouble is to use my eyes and my brains," he said. "I'm afraid you boys do not do that as much as you should. The reason I must know whether Bill Catlin is a cross fellow or a pleasant fellow is because that Tough Customer, when he was running away from here, yipped three times and hopped five feet on his wooden leg."

We tried to think that over, but we could not make sense of it in any way.

Wampus got sort of angry.

"Oh, well! If you're going to talk nonsense!" he said. "It is all right for a smarty to be smart sometimes, but I don't call this one of the times. You fellows may stand it, but I'm not going to. I'm going to dig up that treasure, if it is there, and Jibby can go and scrape up green sand if he wants to. He can't make a fool of me!"

"I do want to get a specimen of that sand," Jibby said soberly. "And, when you have dug treasure awhile, you boys had better come down to the Run.

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It is too dry up here. I expect there is plenty of mud in the Run."

With that Jibby went off. We watched him go.

"I don't like it," I said. "I'll bet Jibby has something in his mind that we don't know anything about. I'm going with him. When Jibby Jones talks like a crazy man, you want to look out; he's always talking sense then."

So I started to follow Jibby, but Wampus Smale called me back, and the three of them — Wampus and Tad and Skippy — talked to me and said we would all look silly if we let Jibby Jones scare us with a lot of nonsense talk. By the time they had talked enough, Jibby was going out of sight, so I made up my mind I would stick to the fellows. We picked up our tools and started for the dead pine tree.

I was worried a little, even though it all looked as simple as crossing a room to pick up a paper. It seemed that there must be something about the green sand in the Run that meant more than we thought, or something else. I rather knew that Jibby would not go off to get a grain of sand for his collection just then, when the treasure was so near, unless he had something worth while in his mind. I remembered what he had said about the green sand being, perhaps, the marks to show the old land pirate's men the way to the buried treasure — "Go up the Mississippi until you come to a creek five miles below Riverbank; go up the creek until you come to green sand in the creek bottom; then

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climb the right bank of the creek and find a signal pine, and dig under the pine." That was what Jibby had thought out as the directions old John A. Murrell might have given back in 1835. I was worried, but I did not have the slightest idea what Jibby's real idea of the trouble to come was.

We walked over to the dead pine and talked for a minute about the best way to begin. Wampus wanted to take the pick and dig right into the baked soil, but Skippy had another idea of it.

"When this pine was planted," he said, "it must have been a very small one, and if Murrell's men buried the treasure under it they must have buried it close to the tree. Then the tree grew, and now, probably, the treasure is right under the tree, or under its big roots. I think we can save time by taking the axe and cutting down the tree."

"Oh, now you are talking like Jibby Jones!" Wampus said, and it was easy to see that he was plumb disgusted with Jibby Jones. "Go ahead and chop, if you want to; I'm going to dig."

He raised his pick above his head and brought it down hard into the dry soil, and Skippy swung the axe and chopped into the dead pine tree. Almost that same instant Tad Willing jumped about four feet into the air and yelped like a scalded dog, and when he hit the ground he grabbed his ankle and yelped again, and then broke for the brick house at about forty miles an hour, batting at his head and yipping like an Indian.

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And Skippy and Wampus Smale were not far behind him.

"Wouch!" Wampus cried, and Skippy yelled, "Ow-wow! Bumblebees! Owp!" And they went for the brick house in big jumps. I did not have to look at them to learn how to lope, either. I was already on my way, and the thing I said when the first bumblebee jabbed his stinger into the back of my neck was not "I beg your pardon!" I don't know what it was. I was too busy to notice. I said what I had to say and I did what I thought was the best thing to do, and I did not bother to put on any trimmings.

Along in May you can't pick up a bumblebee and kiss it, because affection of that sort is one thing a bumblebee does not understand much about, but a May bumblebee is a gentle violet alongside of a September bumblebee. By September a bumblebee is as grouchy as a snake with a sore tail, and is just aching to stick his stinger into somebody. I suppose a bumblebee spends the whole summer sharpening its stinger and getting ready for battle, and by September it wants war. And this was the meanest day of September for hostile bumblebees. There were about ten million of them in the nest under that old pine tree, and every bumblebee was fully ripe and as big as a plum, and it seemed as if they had let their stingers lie out in the sun until they were red-hot. It was the meanest lot of bees I ever got acquainted with. Bees that would have flown

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aside to get out of your way in May were now so eager to jab a boy that, if one of them had been on its way from New York to Boston to attend its grandmother's funeral, it would have swerved aside to Los Angeles, California, to sting a brass Cupid on a fountain.

When we gathered our scattered forces together in the old brick farmhouse, I had five stings in me, and Skippy had eight lumps that were like young mountains and still growing, and Tad had seven honorable wounds and one bee still skirmishing in the thick growth on his head, and Wampus — well, Wampus would not stand still long enough to let us count him. A couple of bees had gone down inside of his shirt and Wampus was disrobing by jerks. He yanked at the collar of his shirt so hard that a pearl button flew eight feet and hit Tad on the neck and Tad jumped and yelled. He thought it was another bee come to bury a red-hot bayonet in him.

Three bees — some of the cavalry, I suppose — had followed us to turn our retreat into a rout, and they came right into the old brick house without knocking, and for three minutes Tad and Skippy and I had all we needed to do whacking at those bees with our caps. Then one of them stung Tad and was satisfied, and the other two took Wampus's bare back as an insult, and Wampus yipped twice more.

Then there was silence, except for low moans and loud "Ow-wow-wows!" Wampus began to cry. I suppose he felt like one of the devastated regions

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after the Germans had shot it full of shell-holes. Skippy was the first to show any sense.

"Gee whiz!" he said, hopping on one leg. "I'm stinging all over! This is no place to be. We've got to get to where there is some cool mud to daub on these stings."

Right then I knew why Jibby Jones had said that we had better follow him to the Run after we had dug treasure awhile, and why he had said it was too dry by the pine tree, and why he had said there was plenty of mud in the Run.

We trotted toward the Run as fast as we could, because every sting was doing its best to burn, and as we went I began to see the best kind of good sense in every word Jibby had said that we had thought was foolish. He wanted to go to the green sand because that place was far from the bumblebees, and he knew there were bumblebees at the old pine tree because the Tough Customer had yipped and sprinted when he passed close to it. And there was sense in what he had asked about Bill Catlin, too. If Bill Catlin was a good-natured fellow and burned kerosene, he would lend us a can of kerosene and we could burn out the bees before we began to dig.

I tried to tell this to the fellows, but they did not pay much attention. They were in a hurry. We all piled in among the trees and down the bank of the Run, and there was Jibby Jones. He was sitting on a large flat rock, in the cool shade, and on the rock

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were about forty nice little mud pies he had made and put there, each one nice and cool and soppy, all ready to plaster on our bee stings!

Jibby Jones looked up when we came piling down to where he was.

“I’ve got forty-two made,” he said. “I thought I would make sixty, but you came sooner than I thought you would. Help yourselves.”

We did. We grabbed the mud plasters and slapped them on the hot bee stings, and Jibby Jones helped us. Oh, boy! but that cool wet mud felt fine! Jibby plastered the stings on Wampus Smale’s back himself, and Wampus never said a word about any one talking foolish talk. He just said:

“Ah! that feels good! Oh! that feels good! Put on another fresh one, Jibby.”

CHAPTER XXII

A NEW SWIMMING-HOLE

By and by we began to sting less and to feel better.

"Did you bring the tools?" Jibby asked, innocently.

"I should say not!" Skippy said. "What was the use? A bee can't sting an axe."

"Those bees could," I said. "I expect that spade will be all swelled up like a balloon by the time we see it again."

That made Wampus laugh, which was a sign he was feeling better, too. I told Jibby I knew now why he wanted to know if Bill Catlin was a good-natured man.

"Yes," Jibby said, "I thought you would figure it out sooner or later."

"Well, the next time," I said, "don't be so polite. Don't treat us as if we had any sense at all. Make a picture of a bee and shove it in our faces."

"Yes, do!" Skippy said. "I'd rather, any day, have a picture of a bee shoved in my face than have a real bee shove itself in my neck."

That made us all laugh, and Jibby washed the mud off Wampus Smale's back, and when Wampus had put on his clothes we sat down and had lunch. I never ate anything that tasted better, and when

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we had finished we lay back for a while, just feeling good. Jibby Jones laughed.

"Laughing at us?" I asked.

"No," he said. "I'm laughing at myself. I'm thinking what a silly I was to begin collecting sand from everywhere, and thinking one grain from each place would be enough. I've been looking at this sand through my magnifying-glass, and one grain won't do."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Look at it," he said, and he tossed me his magnifying-glass.

The minute I looked at the sand through the glass I saw what he meant. Each grain stood out like the setting of a ring, and each grain was transparent, and sparkled, but not one grain was green! About half the grains were yellow and the other half were blue. It was only because they were so small and so mixed together that the sand looked green, because yellow and blue mixed makes green. I handed the glass to Wampus, and he looked and passed it on until we had all seen that the green sand was not green sand at all, but yellow sand and blue sand mixed.

After a while Jibby yawned.

"Well," he said, "if we are going to get that treasure, we had better be stirring ourselves. Wampus, is Bill Catlin a good-natured man or is he — "

"Aw, quit!" Wampus said, and turned as red as his bee stings. "Bill Catlin is all right. He will lend us a can of kerosene quick enough."

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So we fixed it that we would go up to Bill Catlin's and get an oil can and some kerosene. Jibby said he would not go.

"Bill don't know me," he said, "and he might get frightened if he saw my nose."

That was a joke, of course, and we coaxed Jibby to go with us, but he would not go. I think he wanted to punish us for not paying attention to him when he tried to tell us in his own way about the bees. He made one excuse after another. He said he looked such a silly that Bill would be afraid to trust us with kerosene if he was along. He said a lot of things like that. Finally he said we had better go without him.

"You needn't take so long," he said, "because you can all run fast. I know, because I heard you running."

We left him lying there and went up through the woods to Bill Catlin's. He was not at home, but his wife was a nice lady and let us have a gallon can full of kerosene. We stopped to eat a few grapes in Bill Catlin's vineyard, to keep them from going to waste, and then we started across a field toward the woods again, but we had hardly climbed the fence when we saw Jibby coming toward us. He was on a slow lope, and he waved us back, so we stopped short and waited until he came up to us.

"Wait!" he said, and then he waited until he got his breath. "We've got to be careful now. The enemy is at the green sands."

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I laughed. I thought he meant the bees had come down there, or that, maybe, Jibby had run into another nest of them, but it was not that, and it was worse than anything we had ever thought could happen.

Jibby had been lying there on the bank by the green sands waiting for us when, all at once, he heard voices — men's voices. They were the voices of men coming up the Run, and one or two were complaining that this could not be the right creek, and that they had come more than far enough up it, but others said they had better be sure and go a little farther to see whether there was any green sand.

Jibby put everything that was left of the lunch back in the basket and crept up the bank of the Run and hid the basket. Then he edged along down to where the men were and took a peek at them from the top of the bank. There were ten of them, seven white men and three negroes, and one of the white men had red hair and a scar over his eye. The negroes were loaded down with bags and bundles. They had stopped, and the negroes were complaining that they had carried that stuff far enough for one day. They said there was no hurry, and that the treasure would not get away after it had remained right in one place almost a hundred years, they guessed, and that it was no use working black men to death, anyway.

Then the Red-Headed Bandit swore.

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"You-all look mighty sharp you don't let anything happen to that provender," he said. "I'm a bad man when I get riled. I'm the great-grandson of my great-grandfather, and he killed more men than there are kinky hairs on all your worthless heads, and I don't mind killing three more blacks right now, and I'll do it if you let that food stuff get harmed."

The other men growled and scowled at the blacks, too, then, and the negroes mumbled and scolded in low voices.

"Tell you what, Jim," one of them said, "I reckon I feel about like these darks feel. We don't know that this creek is Murrell's Run nohow. We might go up and up and get to nowhere in the end. You's pushin' us too hard and steady, Jim. Tomorrow is another day."

"Yes, and who knows how long we've got to be huntin' for that treasure, Jake?" the man called Jim answered. "We ain't got none too much food for a big gang like this, Jake. We-all can't be skir-mishing around the country for food, Jake, when we're on an exhibition like this."

He meant expedition.

"No," Jake said, "but we can't walk up every creek to the No'th Pole, Jim, either. We ain't no Stefanssons or Pearys."

They did not look like it, either, Jibby said. The seven whites looked like the mountaineers he and his father had seen in the Ozarks — Hill-Billies they

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call them down there. They looked like the laziest lot that ever lived.

"Well, I'll tell you what, Jake," Jim said then. "Let the darks dump their stuff here, and we'll go on up the creek a ways and sort of speculate around. That's fair."

"You white folks want to walk our foots off!" one of the blacks said then, but he put down his load.

"Hey, there, you!" Jim shouted. "Heft that stuff down easy, can't you? Ain't I told you often enough there's dynamite in that bag?"

"I shore did heft it easy, boss," the negro said. "I don't heft no dynamite down hard."

They talked awhile longer, and the white men decided to let the negroes stay to watch the dunnage, and they started off up the creek. The three black men stretched out on the yellow sand in the sun and got ready to go to sleep, and then Jibby stole away and came for us.

"Aw, pshaw!" Wampus said. "That ends it! Those men have dynamite and everything and they'll get that treasure, and we're beaten out of it!"

"Maybe!" Jibby said. "I don't know yet. I remember when I was in New Orleans with my father and we went down to the levee and a bale of cotton rolled over."

"What has that got to do with it?" Wampus asked.

"Why, a negro was asleep, stretched out on the ground," Jibby said, "and the bale of cotton rolled

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on top of him and across him and then off of him again."

"Did it kill him?" Skippy asked.

"No," Jibby said. "That isn't it. I was just telling you how one of those Southern negroes sleeps when he stretches out in the sun. This one just brushed his hand across his face and said, 'Shoo fly! go 'way!' and went on sleeping. Sleeping is the best thing some of those negroes do."

"Well, what?" I asked.

"Nothing much," Jibby said. "I was only thinking that the coming of this gang of treasure-hunters is the best luck we've had yet. We only guessed there was treasure here; now we know it. Now all we have to do is get rid of these men."

"And that is so easy! Only ten of them!" I said.

"Well, I am surprised at you, George," Jibby drawled. "You talk as if they were ten bumblebees."

"But how are we going to get rid of them?" Wampus asked.

Jibby fondled his nose gently.

"Perhaps," he said slowly, "they won't like it here and will go away without being asked to go."

Well, I didn't like it much, but Jibby picked up the oil can and started for the woods along the Run, and, of course, a fellow could not hang back, so we all went. When we were near the edge of the bank, we all got down and wiggled forward until we could look over the edge and down at the place where the

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three negroes were asleep. They were sound asleep, too — plenty of sound, if you mean the sound of snoring.

The bank was about twelve feet high there, but not straight up and down. It slanted toward the creek and was covered with grass and weeds and a few small bushes as creek banks usually are. The dunnage of the treasure-hunters was piled in one pile close to where the foot of the bank met the sandy stretch on which the three black men were asleep. We looked down awhile, and then wiggled back and got to our feet and went off a few yards to hold a council.

“We’ll take a bunch of rocks and slam them down on those men,” Wampus said. “We’ll scare the life out of them.”

Jibby was hunting around in the bushes, but just then he found what he was looking for — his covered lunch-basket. He took out the green felt bag his cat Orlando had been in and pulled the stout drawstring out of the hem at the mouth of the bag. He tried this over his knee, to see if it was strong, and it was strong.

We were whispering, saying how we could stone those three men, but Jibby unbuttoned his shirt and pulled it over his head and began tearing strips off it. He tied the strips together and tested them at the knots, until he had eight or ten feet of it. Then he picked up the oil can and motioned us to follow him. None of us knew what he was going to do, but we

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followed him back to the edge of the bank like little lambs. We had had enough lessons that day to know that Jibby Jones mostly knew what he was doing before he started to do it.

When we got to the edge of the bank, Jibby stood up quietly and took hold of a young birch tree that stood near the edge of the bank and bent it back, away from the bank, until it was almost flat on the ground. He motioned Wampus to come and hold it down for him, and then he went and looked down at the dunnage again, and came back and eyed the birch stem and tied the oil can to the stem by its handle. He used the stout string from the green bag. Then he tied one end of the string he had made from the strips of shirt to the bottom of the oil can.

When Jibby had done all this, I began to see what he was up to, and, for once in my life, I guessed right. We let the birch straighten up slowly and then pushed it down again, but this time toward the creek, so it stuck out over the bank, and Tad and Wampus and Skippy and I bore around on it until it held the can of kerosene exactly over the pile of dunnage and food and stuff down below. Then Jibby pulled on the string he had made of the shirt strips and the oil can tipped, and all the oil poured out of the can onto the food and other stuff in the treasure-hunters' pile. Then we let the tree straighten up slowly again. It was a good job. It had spoiled all that food, because nothing spoils food more than having coal oil on it. We knew

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from what the treasure-hunters had said that they could not stay there long now; they would have to go away and get more food, probably down the river somewhere.

I would have called that a good job and well done, but you can never tell what Jibby Jones has in his mind. He was taking the pieces of old newspaper out of his lunch-basket and getting handfuls of dry grass, and balling it all up into a big ball, and, when he had done this, he tied the ball around and around with the string he had made of shirt strips.

None of us knew what he was up to, so we just stood and looked, but, when he had the ball all made, he untied the oil can and let the last of the kerosene dribble on the ball. Then he tied the ball to the birch, but a little higher than the can had been tied.

"Now," he said, "who has a match?"

We all looked, but we did not have a match; not even a broken one, and for a minute Jibby looked pretty blue.

"I ought to have thought of matches," he said. "When a man goes treasure-hunting he ought to think of everything. I had a bully scheme. I was going to light this fire ball and bend the birch down until it touched that pile of stuff I spilled the kerosene on, and light the whole pile. I don't know what would have happened, but it would have been something. Maybe the stuff would have burned and maybe the dynamite would have gone off. It would

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have bothered those fellows a lot, anyway. But now we have no matches."

"If we had a flint and some steel," Wampus said, "we could strike fire, maybe."

"Or if any of us knew how to rub two sticks together and make fire," I said.

But Jibby Jones was busy before I got it half said. He had his knife out and was scraping the handle of his lunch-basket, getting fine shreds off it, and he splintered some of the basket and made a little pile of sticks, like match-sticks, and the next moment he was down on his stomach holding his magnifying-glass above the little pile so that the concentrated rays of the sun fell full on the lint he had scraped. In another moment a little string of blue smoke began to float upward, and then there was a little flicker of red flame and the whole little pile was ablaze. Jibby fed more pieces of the basket to the pile.

"Now!" he said, "you fellows get some dead wood or broken branches and creep to the edge of the bank. Wampus, I want you to help me weigh this birch down so the fire ball will light that pile of stuff. And the minute it is alight, I want Skippy and Tad and George to slam the dead wood and stuff at those black men, and yell like Indians. Then cut and run. I don't know how much dynamite there is in that pile, and I don't know what it will do when it takes a notion to do it."

We crept back to the edge of the bank and we had

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plenty of dead wood — big chunks of punk, as we call it — and we were pretty sure there were going to be three surprised black men in about one minute. Jibby lit the fire ball and he and Wampus bore the little birch tree over and bore it down, and he had figured the distance right enough, but the birch would not bear all the way down. It went flat against the top of the bank, but that stopped it and the fire ball was a good two feet above the pile of oil-soaked dunnage and food and dynamite.

“Hold it!” Jibby whispered. “Hold it!” And Wampus knelt on the birch. The fire ball blazed and sent up black smoke, and in less than a minute the string that held it to the birch caught fire and burned through and the fire ball fell on the pile of stuff. It lay there and burned and the top of the pile of stuff caught the flames and began to burn, too.

“Yip! Ye-ow-wow!” Jibby yelled, like a wild Indian, and he picked up a hunk of dead wood and let fly at the negroes, and we all did the same, and yelled as hard as we could.

About six out of ten of the things we threw hit where we meant them to hit, and those three black men jumped to their feet and stared around for just about one second of time. They were scared ash color, and they did not know where they were for a moment, but they saw the black smoke piling up from the pile of dunnage and they started down the Run faster than we had run from the bumblebees.

“Dyn'mite! Dyn'mite!” they shouted, but we

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did not wait to see or hear any more. Jibby was not waiting. He legged it away from there, and we were not two steps behind him, and when he was deep in the woods he threw himself down, and we did as Jibby did. It seemed the wisest thing to do.

We were no more than flat on the ground before there came a big, flat, heavy sort of "boom!" and then sand and small gravel fell on us like a sort of rain, and Jibby got up. We went back toward the edge of the Run, keeping mighty quiet, and we heard the seven men come loping down the creek, and, when they reached the place where we had blown up their stores, they swore and said they might have known it was not safe to trust those worthless darks.

"We-all sure has got miserable luck," the man called Jim said, in a most disgusted way. "Just when we find the green sand, we get our stuff blowed to nothing. Now we've got to go and get more feed and more dynamite and more everything. It's bad luck, but I'm right down glad of one thing; them darks was blowed clean to nothing, too."

They stood there awhile looking at the deep hole the blast had blown in the creek bed, and then they went on down the Run, growling and complaining, and we knew we had a couple of days at least to dig for treasure before they came back. We slid down the bank and took a look at things ourselves. The bushes and grass and weeds had been blown away clean, and there was a hole where the sand had been,

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ten or twelve feet deep and about twenty-five feet long, and as wide as that.

Jibby Jones sat down on the edge of the hole and began to take off his pants, because he did not have any shirt to take off — he had torn it to strips.

“Wampus,” he drawled out, in that slow way of his, “you take the kerosene can and go back and ask Mrs. Catlin if she will lend us another can of kerosene. I’m going to take a bath in the good old swimming-hole. I thought maybe there would be one on this Run, somewhere.”

And, sure enough, there was the water trickling into that hole, and when Wampus got back with the kerosene, Tad and Jibby and Skippy and I were all in the pool splashing around and having a gay time. Jibby was right; there was a swimming-pool in Murrell’s Run.

CHAPTER XXIII

TREASURE TROVE

THE new swimming-pool that had been dug out in the creek by the explosion was rather muddy, but it was wet, and it was fun to think we were swimming in a pool nobody had ever swam in before. It was like discovering a new ocean or something.

Wampus put down the can of kerosene.

"Come on out," he said. "If we are going to dig for that land pirate's treasure to-day, we had better be burning out the bumblebees and getting at it. Bill Catlin was home this time, and he's coming over. He wanted to know what we were going to do with the kerosene, and I had to tell him, and he's going to make us give him half of all we find."

"Why? What right has he to make us do that?" I wanted to know, for I didn't think Bill Catlin or anybody else had a right to any of that treasure when Jibby had been the only one to think of it being there, and when we had planned so hard to get it.

"Treasure trove, that's why!" Wampus said.

And just then Bill Catlin came to the edge of the creek bank and looked down at us getting into our clothes.

"Well, boys," he said, "here I am. I hope we find enough to make us all rich and happy all the

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rest of our lives. Hurry into your duds and we'll get busy."

Jibby Jones was putting on his pants as slow and deliberate as if he had all day to do it in, and right there I made a mistake. I ought to have kept my mouth shut until Jibby had his clothes on and his spectacles on and was ready to talk, because that is always the safe thing to do. But I had to say my say.

"We don't need any help," I said. "We don't want to divide this with anybody. Jibby Jones thought of the treasure being here, and it is going to be ours — all of it."

"That so?" Bill Catlin asked. "How about treasure trove, my son?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"All I mean," said Bill Catlin, grinning, "is that it seems to me I've heard somewhere that there's a law of treasure trove, and that half of any hidden treasure that is found on any man's land belongs to the man that owns the land."

"All right!" I said, quick. "That settles it. Wampus's father owns this land and you don't."

"I lease it," said Bill Catlin. "I rent it of Wampus's father. As I look at it, that gives me everything that is on the land or in the land. Why, I could order Wampus's father off this land if I wanted to, or the whole lot of you, for that matter. I could sue you for trespass this very minute, if I wanted to, for coming on this land. Sure, I could!

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I guess that makes me even better than the owner. I guess it entitles me to half the treasure we find."

What Bill Catlin said took all the wind out of my sails in a second. There was one sail it did not take the wind out of, though; that was the jib on Jibby Jones's face — the nose he called his jib sail. Jibby was hitching up his trousers as if Bill Catlin or nothing in the world mattered a cent.

"Is that so, Jibby?" Tad Willing asked.

"He can order us off the place," Jibby drawled in his slow way, "and he can sue us for trespass if we don't go. I know that, because once, when father was digging for mastodon bones in a cornfield in Arizona, the man that owned the farm ordered father off and father did not want to go. So the man hit father on the head with a club, and father sued him for damages, and the justice of the peace made the man pay father five dollars for hitting him, and made father pay the man five dollars for trespassing, and neither of them *had* five dollars."

"What did they do? Go to jail?" asked Bill Catlin.

"No, sir," Jibby said. "The justice of the peace lent father five dollars and father paid the man with it, and then the man paid father with it, and then father paid it back to the justice of the peace. Father says the justice said then, 'There! I hope that will be a lesson to both of you. You have got off easy. If I had been hard-hearted, I would have made you pay each other ten dollars apiece,

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and I haven't got but eight dollars and sixty cents, so where would you have been then?"

Bill Catlin laughed, and that made him like Jibby Jones right away, because laughing and liking are always close together.

"I bet they would have gone to jail, just because they lacked a little common sense," Bill Catlin said. "If I had been there, I could have fixed it up easy. I would have had your father borrow the eight dollars and sixty cents and pay the man, and then your father would have owed him only one dollar and forty cents. Then I would have had the man pay the money back to your father and the man would have owed your father only one dollar and forty cents. Then your father would have given the eight dollars and sixty cents back to the justice, and he wouldn't have owed *him* anything. And then all your father would have had to do would have been to borrow one dollar and forty cents from the justice, and when it had passed around, the whole ten dollars would have been paid. Nobody would have owed anybody anything. Your father and the man could have paid each other a million dollars that way. You've got to use common sense."

"Yes, sir," Jibby said politely.

It pleased Bill Catlin to have an intelligent-looking boy with tortoise-shell spectacles take what he said so seriously, and he was mightily tickled.

"You've got common sense, and education, too; I can see that," he said to Jibby, which wasn't saying

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anything very nice to us, as I looked at it, but we didn't say anything, because we saw Jibby was going to talk again.

"Yes, sir," Jibby said, as if he was pleased to have Bill Catlin compliment him that way. "I do try to know something; I find it comes in handy sometimes. I think it is better than just thinking you know something. My father says so. My father says it is foolish to read in a story book that a man made a trip to the moon and then to think you know that a man did make a trip to the moon; my father says it is better to find out the true facts first."

"And your father knows what he is talking about," Bill Catlin said.

"Yes, sir," said Jibby Jones meekly; and then he added, in the same meek way, "What book did you read about treasure trove in, Mr. Catlin?"

Well, Bill Catlin sort of looked at Jibby as if he hadn't seen him before. He stared at him. Then he got red in the face.

"What did you ask that for?" he wanted to know.

"Because in the books I read," Jibby said, "I couldn't find anything about halves and halves when you find treasure. Of course," he added, "I only read some encyclopædias and law books and things like that, as anybody would when they start out to dig for treasure. I don't believe even the biggest book weighed over ten pounds, and only a part of that one was about hidden treasure, so maybe what I think I know don't amount to much."

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Then Bill Catlin asked him what he had found in the books, and Jibby said that "treasure trove" meant any gold or silver or money found hidden in the ground or in any private place, the ownership of which was unknown. In England, Jibby said, the treasure that was found belonged to the king and not to the finder, but, if the owner was known or was discovered later, the treasure belonged to the owner, and not to the king or the finder at all, and if the finder kept it or hid it he could be jailed.

"You don't mean it!" Bill Catlin exclaimed.

"Yes, sir; that's what the books say," Jibby said. "And in the United States there isn't any such thing as treasure trove at all. When anything is found on the land, it belongs to the man that finds it, unless he knows the true owner, and then it belongs to the true owner, just as if it was a cow or a suit of clothes or a bushel of apples."

"Then I don't come in at all, hey?" Bill Catlin said.

"No, sir," Jibby said, "but all we have found so far is an old 1804 dollar."

"Oh, I don't want that," said Bill Catlin carelessly. He was very much disappointed; I guess he had expected to get fifty thousand dollars, maybe. "Well," he said, "I'll go along and help you burn out the bees, anyway."

We were all ready to start then, and Wampus picked up the can of kerosene and waded across the creek, and Tad and Skippy Root and I followed him.

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Jibby sort of waited for Bill Catlin while Bill slid down the bank, and just then we heard voices of men. The men were coming up the creek, and we knew them by their voices. They were the Jim and Jake and the rest that had been up the creek before — the tough customers that had come all the way from Arkansas to hunt for the Murrell treasure. They were coming back.

I ran up the bank of the creek in a hurry, and so did Wampus and Tad and Skippy. I thought sure there was going to be trouble if those men caught us, and I looked through the trees toward the road, all ready to run for it. What I saw made me look twice.

“Gee whiz!” I said. “Look there, will you!”

It was enough to make any one look. What Wampus had said to his folks must have leaked out, or something, for it looked as if every man and boy in Riverbank was coming up the road toward the dead pine to dig for that land pirate’s treasure. It looked like ten thousand, but I guess it was only about a thousand men and boys. There were old men that could hardly walk, and boys that were so young they could hardly walk, and middle-aged men, and even a few women and some girls, and they all had spades or picks or shovels. There were plenty of boys — dozens of them. And our old friend, the Tough Customer tramp, was right there in the front of them all.

I was still looking when Jibby Jones and Bill Catlin climbed the bank to where they could see

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that great army of treasure-hunters coming up the road. Jibby was talking to Bill Catlin, telling him who the men were that were coming up the creek, and the minute he saw the crowd on the road he thought of something. None of the rest of us would have thought of it, but Jibby did.

"Mr. Catlin," he said, "just look at that crowd! They're coming to dig for treasure, and I shouldn't wonder if all the rest of Riverbank came next. It is like a rush to the gold fields, or to the oil fields. Everybody that can come is coming. Why don't you make some money out of it?"

"Money? I'm always glad enough to make money," said Bill Catlin, "but how can I make money out of that crowd?"

"You can't out of all of them," Jibby said, "but you can out of some of them. You could make, anyway, a dollar apiece out of a lot of them. It's the kind of treasure trove we can go half and half on. You have a right to keep all the people off this part of your farm, and you have a right to charge them a dollar apiece for letting them come on it and dig for treasure. If you say so Wampus and George and Skippy and Tad will do the collecting. We'll collect a dollar apiece and give you half of it."

Bill Catlin thought it over and said:

"All right; that's a go."

By that time the seven pirate money-hunters had come up the creek and were climbing the bank to where we were. They looked mean, too. The one

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called Jim, who was the old land pirate's great-grandson, came right up to us and said:

"Look here! Are you the folks that blew up our stuff? We don't stand for any business like that. You hadn't any right to do it, and for half a cent we'd light into you and break you into pieces and chew you up. Now, we've got business here and we want you to get away from here and stay away."

"Yes, sir," Jibby Jones said in his solemn way. "Maybe we will. We didn't know you owned this farm. We thought Wampus Smale's father owned it, and that Mr. Catlin here rented it. We thought that anybody that came on the farm without Mr. Catlin's permission was trespassing and could be put in jail or something. Why, look at all the people!"

The man named Jim climbed up the bank and looked. He swore.

"What's that crowd?"

"They're going to hunt for some old land pirate's treasure, I guess," Jibby said. "I guess they think there is some of it hidden around here somewhere. But Mr. Catlin thought we would charge them a dollar apiece for letting them hunt it. We didn't know you owned this land."

"A dollar, hey?" said the land pirate's great-grandson. "Well, we'll give you a dollar apiece — seven dollars for the seven of us — if that's what you want."

"Thank you," Jibby said very politely, and, while the land pirate's great-grandson was counting

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out the money, he told Wampus and Skippy and Tad and Mr. Catlin and me to go and stop the crowd and tell them it cost a dollar a day to hunt land pirate's treasure on this farm. "And tell them to look out for the bumblebees," he said. "We wouldn't like the whole of Riverbank to get all stung up when all they are doing is trying to get the treasure before we get it."

So Bill Catlin and all us boys but Jibby ran toward the crowd to tell them, and one of the first men we saw was the sheriff. We boys did not know him very well, but Bill Catlin did, and he went up to him and warned him that coming on the farm was trespass and that he looked to the sheriff to warn everybody and to keep off himself.

The sheriff hated it, but he had to do it, because it was his duty. He turned and held up both hands, to stop the crowd.

"But you can tell them," Bill Catlin said, just before the sheriff spoke up, "that they can come on the farm and hunt treasure for one dollar each per day."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TREASURE

So that was what the sheriff told them, and at first there was a good deal of complaining, but, when they saw that the sheriff and Bill Catlin meant it, they formed in line at the corner, and Skippy and Tad and Wampus and me collected the dollars. Every time we took a dollar we said, "Thank you. Look out for bumblebees under the old dead pine there," and they did look out. Most of them went a good distance around the old pine, and every one of them made a straight line for the old tumbledown farmhouse as soon as they were safe from the bees. Some that did not have money to pay the dollar borrowed some from others, but a few could not get in. But I've got to tell you what Jibby was doing.

As soon as Jibby had the seven dollars from the Arkansas men he said:

"All right, you can hunt treasure now, until midnight, but if you don't find it by then it will cost you another seven dollars."

"Don't you worry, son," the man named Jim said. "We'll find what there is to find before sundown, and if you hadn't blown up our dynamite we would have found it in half an hour. We know where it is."

"That's good," said Jibby Jones. "My father

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always says it is wise to know what you are going to do before you do it. So I guess you know the law about hidden treasure, too?"

"It belongs to the man that owned it in the first place," said the man named Jim, "and I guess that as good as means me. I didn't come all the way up here from Arkansas without getting ready beforehand, like your father says to. I've got papers here to prove that I'm the great-grandson of old John A. Murrell, the land pirate, and that I'm his only heir. So that settles that! If great-grandfather was alive, it would be his treasure, and if any other Murrells were alive part of the treasure would be theirs, but I'm the only one alive, so it is mine. That's all fixed, and if there is any treasure there I get half, and these six friends of mine divide the other half among them. That so, men?"

The six tough-looking Arkansans said it was so.

"Go and get it, then," Jibby Jones said.

Jim and Jake and the other five got together and talked awhile in whispers, looking out through the trees now and then. They were making plans. The crowd from Riverbank was so big it couldn't all get inside the ruined farmhouse and those that couldn't were digging outside of it, and the whole lot — those inside and those outside — were shouting and quarreling and carrying on the way money-crazy people do. It was like a riot or something, and all the while more strings of people were coming up the road and stopping to pay us a dollar, and then rush-

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ing for the old farmhouse, afraid they would not get there in time.

The seven Arkansans had their spades and shovels and picks, and they got together in a bunch, and when Jim gave the word they started across the weedy field with a rush, and straight for the old signal pine, too. Jibby watched them until they were halfway across the field, and then he came wandering toward where we boys and Bill Catlin were collecting money from the late comers. We had our pockets full of silver dollars and bills and small change.

"That's pretty good," Jibby said, "but we made one mistake."

"What do you mean?" I said. "Do you mean we should have brought a gunnysack to carry the money in?"

"No," he said; "we ought to have advertised in the Riverbank 'Eagle' — the weekly edition of it that goes to the farmers. Everybody in town knows about the hidden treasure by now, but the farmers don't. We ought to have put an advertisement in the paper so the farmers could have paid us a dollar apiece, too. But I suppose no one can think of everything."

We all turned just then, because one of the Arkansas men had let out a yell. A bumblebee had just stung him. The next moment another one let out a yell; he had got his sting, too.

The Arkansas men had gone at the old pine tree

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slam bang, because they knew they had to work fast. They knew that, as soon as the men and boys by the farmhouse saw them digging at the tree, there would be a rush for the tree, so they all piled into the work at once and as hard as they could, and there is nothing bumblebees hate so much as they hate just that. They hate hurry.

In a moment the whole seven Arkansans were hopping and swearing and slashing at their necks and beating at the air, but they kept right on digging and picking and whacking at the tree. They made more than chips fly. Whang would go a pick into the dead wood and out would come a big slice of tree, and all the while the whole seven were jumping and yelling and cussing like crazy men.

Then some of the crowd began to run from the old farmhouse toward the old pine, and then others began to run, but, when the first man came near the tree, he yelled like fury and slapped the back of his neck and began to dance, and then he ran. He ran zigzag, but he ran away from the tree. The rest of the Riverbankers stopped, and when he reached them they asked what was the matter and he must have said "Bees!" for they all crowded back. They made me think of the mob in a movie. They went back a step at a time as if a director was saying, "Now! Mob — back one step; show fear; back another step!" Only it was bees doing the directing this time.

Then the Arkansans gave it up, all but Jim. He

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wrapped his coat around his head and dug and hopped but of a sudden he dropped his pick and hit himself in four or six places and jerked the coat from his head and came loping toward us sweeping the air with the coat, all around his head. He had not found the treasure, but he had found the bees' nest, and as he came toward us we scooped up the money and held our pockets and ran.

We had so much money we were weighted down with it, and we had to run easy or spill it, but we made pretty good time. Not a bee got us. We ran down the road toward Riverbank a hundred yards or so, and that was far enough, for the seven Arkansans only came about fifty yards and they were making it lively for the bumblebees, and the bumblebees were making it lively for them. Neither of them had time for anything else just then.

While we were all scattered that way, we saw one man come out of the Riverbank crowd and walk right up to the dead pine. It was the Tough Customer. He had tied his pants tight around his ankle, and he had pulled his shirt up around his head, and he had his one woolen sock on one hand for a mitten and a red handkerchief tied around the other hand. With his coat on, there wasn't a place a bee could get at him, and he hobbled right up to the dead pine and picked up the pick Jim had thrown down, and began to dig.

Jibby Jones looked disgusted.

"Dear me!" he said. "I don't like that at all! I

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did hope we might find that treasure ourselves, but I certainly think it is a shame for the Tough Customer to find it after all the trouble we took to make him depart."

This was too much for Wampus.

"What do you care who digs it up, Jibby?" he asked. "That Jim fellow gets it, anyway. You said yourself that, no matter whose land it was found on and no matter who found it, the treasure belonged to whoever owned it first. It wouldn't be us, if we found it, and it won't be the Tough Customer, if he finds it. The treasure will belong to that Jim man from Arkansas, because he is the heir of old John A. Murrell, and John A. Murrell was the first owner."

The only answer Jibby gave to that was to reach out a hand and feel of Wampus's shirt, but he didn't like the feel of it, so he felt of mine and he seemed to like it better.

"Take off your shirt, George," he said, slow and calm, as if he had all day to waste, and he took off his own shoes and pulled off his socks. "I don't think that tramp has brains," he said, "but I think he has robbed honey hives, and sometimes experience is as good as brains."

I had my shirt off now, for I can work pretty quick when I have to, and then Jibby began pulling it over his head.

"Mr. Catlin," he said, "I see those Arkansawyers are not fighting bees now" — but how he saw that with my shirt over his head I don't know — "and

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they are not digging treasure. They seem to be looking at the sheriff as if they did not like him. And I never did like them much. I never did think that men who come sneaking up a creek or up any back way were thoroughly honest men. I wonder if it would be a good thing for the sheriff to walk over to them and tell them that they have gone off the farm into the road and that they will have to pay another dollar to get back onto the farm again? If you think that would be a good thing, and you want to tell it to the sheriff, maybe you had better tell the sheriff to pin on his badge so it can be seen."

Bill Catlin grinned.

"I think it might be a good thing," he laughed.

"Thank you," Jibby said, "and it might not hurt anybody if the sheriff ran toward the Arkansawyers to tell them. Maybe they would like to know it as soon as possible, so they can make plans."

Jibby was ready now to go and help the Tough Customer dig treasure and he started. He did not bother to try to see what the Arkansawyers did, but we saw. They were standing in the road, looking at the sheriff and the badge on his coat, and were talking among themselves when Bill Catlin went up to the sheriff and spoke to him and pointed to the Arkansas men. The sheriff nodded his head, and looked down to see that his badge was in plain sight, and then he started for the seven Arkansas men, going pretty fast. Those seven men took one look at him and at Bill Catlin and turned and ran across country,

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jumping the fence and getting away from there as fast as they could.

That was the last we ever saw of them. I don't know what was on their minds, but they must have had mighty guilty consciences about something. Guilty consciences have no use for a sheriff.

There were plenty of bumblebees left by the old pine tree, and the Tough Customer had to keep batting at the holes in his shirt that he had made to see through, but Jibby had the best of that because he was wearing his tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, and no bee, not even a bumblebee, can sting through glass. He picked up a spade and began to dig, and he had hardly stuck spade into the ground twice before he had hit a metal box. He jammed the spade in again, and pried on the handle and up came the box. He did not wait there. He grabbed the box and ran.

The Tough Customer could not see very well, but he knew somebody was getting something that he was not getting and he pulled his shirt from his head. It was a bad mistake. Jibby was gone and the treasure box was gone, but the bees were not all gone. One of them told the Tough Customer so and told him quick and hard, and for the next minute the Tough Customer was not thinking of treasure; he was thinking of bees.

Jibby came running to where we were, and the whole of Riverbank — or all those that had come out to hunt treasure — came running after him, to

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see what he had found. They got to us just as we had all crowded around Jibby and when he was stamping on the box with his heel to break it open. It broke open easy enough.

I jumped at it and grabbed for the gold money that was in it. It was not much; it was only one hundred gold pieces — ten-dollar pieces — one thousand dollars in all, but Jibby was opening a faded piece of old paper that had been in the box.

The writing on the paper was so old we could hardly read it, but we did make it out. This is what it said:

JOHN — I have abided in this locality twenty years now, but no word from you and very poor living here, so mean to go to California, thinking shall do better gold mining than farming. Am taking that which you left with me and will keep it twenty more years, as you said to do, before I touch any of it. If you hunt me look for me near a signal pine as agreed. I am leaving one thousand dollars in case you come and need it to pay expenses. It is part of what you sent.

MURRELL

So that was what the land pirate's treasure amounted to, but one thousand dollars is a lot better than nothing. I believe one man from Riverbank did go to California to look for a signal pine and to hunt for treasure under it, but probably he did not find it. There are millions of pine trees in California, or trees that would do for pine trees.

When we counted up, we found we had taken in eight hundred and fifty-six dollars from the River-

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bank treasure-hunters, and we got half of it, which was eighty-five dollars and sixty cents apiece for Jibby Jones and Wampus and Skippy Root and Tad and me, because we had to give Bill Catlin his half first. And then we got two hundred dollars apiece of the one thousand dollars that was in the box that Jibby had dug up. We didn't send it to Jim from Arkansas, even if he was John A. Murrell's great-grandson. I'll tell you why.

When Jibby was opening the box, the Tough Customer and nearly all the Riverbankers came crowding around to see what Jibby had found, and when they saw, one of the men said:

"Pshaw! Only a thousand dollars! That don't amount to much."

"No," I said, "and we can't keep it, anyway, because in this country hidden treasure has to be given back to whoever the first owner was, or to his heirs, and we know who the first owner was and we know who his heir is."

Right there Jibby Jones surprised us.

"No," he said, "we don't know. We're going to keep this money ourselves, because we don't know who the real owner was, and we never can find out."

"Why can't we?" I asked him.

"Because nobody in the world knows who the first owner was," Jibby said. "John A. Murrell never did own it; he stole it. The man he stole it from was the real owner, and John A. Murrell never did have any right to have it. And how can you ever

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find out who owned it away back in 1835? Nobody could do that. So it is ours and we'll keep it."

And we did. We were just starting back for town when all at once Jibby Jones stopped short.

"Wait!" he said. "I've almost forgotten something. I've got to go back to the creek."

"My land!" Wampus said. "What for?"

"To get two grains of that green sand for my collection of grains of sand," Jibby said. "You can never tell what will happen. To-morrow, or before I have a chance to get a specimen, my father may decide to go to Chile or China or Chattanooga. But, hold on a minute!"

He sat down at the edge of the road and took off his shoe and looked in it.

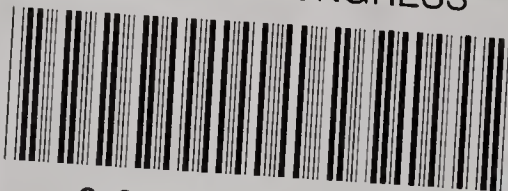
"It's all right!" he said. "We can go on back to town. I've got five or six grains right here in my shoe."

So that was how we went back to town from our treasure-hunting. Skippy and Tad and Wampus and I carried the money and Jibby Jones came along behind us with one shoe on, carrying the other shoe in both hands as if it was a plate of soup, because I do believe he was more interested in not losing those grains of green sand than in all the treasure John A. Murrell ever hid.

But that was the way Jibby Jones was.

THE END

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